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SHOOTING THE MESSENGER

In Defense of the Media Coverage of the War

PETER BEINART
THE EDITORS

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CORRESPONDENCE

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"THE 9/10 PRESIDENT"? How about the "100-1 President"—100 for the $100 billion an Iraqi ground war and occupation is now estimated to cost, and 1 for the paltry $1.3 billion the Bush administration concedes is the only new federal anti-terrorist funding for local first responders in the last year and a half (Jonathan Chait, March 10)? When I wrote my ten-point plan, "Preparing Los Angeles for Terrorism," last year, I based it on the premise that Los Angeles would have to fund counterterrorist programs on its own nickel. It turns out I still overestimated the contribution this administration was willing to make to my city's extraordinary readiness needs. Governing in an era of limits is about priorities. Put a $100 billion war and $600 billion-plus of tax cuts together, and soon we will be talking about the "1000-1 President." It's hard to square these priorities with the pressing terrorism-preparedness deficiencies in Los Angeles and our other major cities.

JACK WEISS
Member, Los Angeles City Council
Los Angeles, California

RACE BAITING

IN RYAN LIZZA'S CAMPAIGN JOURNAL, he singles out Howard Dean of Vermont for special excoriation ("State of Peace," March 10). Dean, writes Lizza, doesn't merely speak, he "hollers." He "yells." Dean, says Lizza, is "not just an angry candidate, he is borderline enraged, and this is a big part of why his 'straight-talking' stump speech is the shrewdest piece of political rhetoric." And what is Dean talking about that is so objectionable? Why, health care for all Americans and not going into Iraq without U.N. support. Can you imagine? The unmitigated gall! And how crass of him to show up in Iowa, thinking he could stand beside prize pigs like Joe Lieberman and John Edwards.

It's clear that Lizza doesn't get it. Witness the coy quote marks around "straight-talking"—Lizza can't believe that a Democratic candidate might actually tell it like he sees it. No, it must be some kind of "shrewd" political ploy. What Lizza in his cynicism cannot credit is that not only is Dean's anger a logical and commendable response to the ruinous policies of the Republicans and the ineptness of his fellow Democrats, it is also genuine. Here in Vermont, Governor Dean is seen as a man of principle and high ethics who cares passionately about education, health care, and social justice. Of course he's mad. I'm mad. Everyone I know is mad. Which is precisely why Dean's message is resonating with Democrats all over the country. These days it takes more guts to do what Dean is doing than to wave the flag and vote for war.

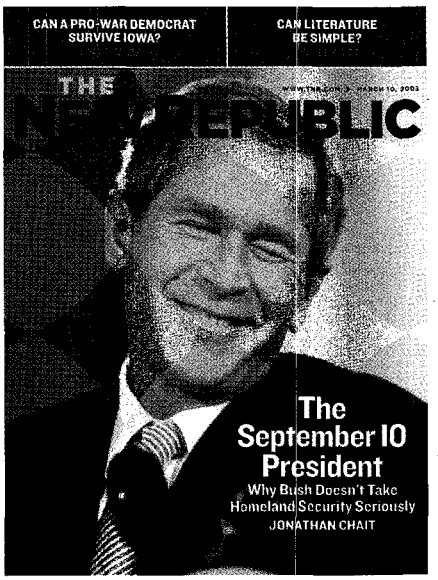
Contrast Lizza's smear job on Dean with his kid-glove treatment of the "unapologetically pro-war" Lieberman: "[He] has been the most steadfast in his support of getting rid of Saddam. ... [He] admirably refused to pander to Democratic constituencies. ... [H]e hopes standing on principle will gain him some respect. ... Before leaving, Lieberman offers a final piece of political wisdom." While Lieberman may appreciate this fulsome tribute to his statesmanlike qualities, readers of TNR expect a little more from your journal—like depth and fairness.

PATIENCE MERRIMAN
Jacksonville, Vermont

MINOR LEAGUE

MARTIN PERETZ'S LOGICAL ANALYSIS brings to mind the collapse of the League of Nations in the 1930s and the analogy between the actions of Britain and France then and those of Germany and France today ("United We Fall," March 3). The failure of the League of Nations to stop Benito Mussolini in his invasion of Ethiopia (known then as Abyssinia) doomed that organization to obsolescence and rendered it meaningless. Similarly, the current lack of will by the United Nations could serve as the death knell of that organization. The difference this time is that the United States not only has the will but the ability to stop a dictator.

NELSON MARANS
Silver Spring, Maryland


CAN A PRO-WAR DEMOCRAT SURVIVE IOWA?
CAN LITERATURE BE SIMPLE?
THE NEW REPUBLIC
The September 10 President
Why Bush Doesn't Take Homeland Security Seriously
JONATHAN CHAIT

EMPIRE STATE

AMERICANS HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO be proud of our non-imperialist history ("The Liberal Power," March 3). Our actions from the Marshall Plan to the containment policy of the cold war to the interventions in Bosnia and Kuwait were admirable. But a policy of using wealth and power to persuade other nations of our wisdom would put us on the path to imperialism. TNR is right that there is a crisis of faith: Many abroad fear that our government's declarations that they are willing to invade Iraq without U.N. sanction, and without allies if necessary, is a signal that the United States is so bent on having its way that it will impose it if it has to. This would be a major change of policy. It would also be a step toward building an empire. It would also be a sign that perhaps our power has corrupted us after all. Foreigners are not angry about what it means to be an American; they are angry because they fear we are turning away from what it means to be an American.

JAMES P. CASEY
Baltimore, Maryland

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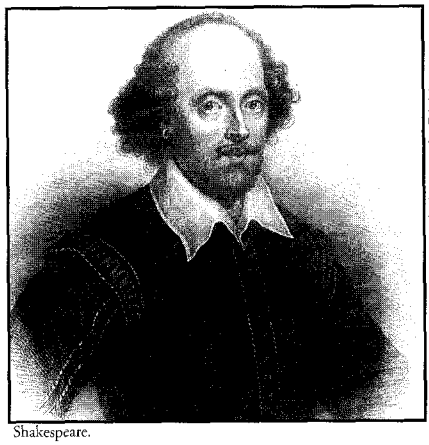

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Media Bias

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

A FRIENDLY WORD OF advice to my fellow hawks: Stop bashing media coverage of the war. It's a diversionary tactic, and it's not fooling anyone.

Over the past week, hawks have hurled two charges at the press. The first is that the media's war coverage is superficial. "It's all totally inappropriate," charged Fox News' Brit Hume last Sunday. "You want to find out how it's going in some aggregate, overall sense. And I think that the coverage cheats people of that, and it dwells on the minute at the expense of the large and the direction of things." Yes, and the Earth is still round. Of course media coverage dwells on the momentary: Any network or newspaper that didn't provide the most up-to-date information possible during the war wouldn't be in business once the war is over. War coverage is made more fragmentary because most of it comes from embedded reporters who only see as much of the fighting as their units do. The reporters stationed at CENTCOM headquarters in Doha, Qatar, are supposed to supplement those snapshots from embeds with the "aggregate, overall sense" of the war's progress, which they glean from U.S. military briefings. Unfortunately, those briefings are widely viewed as useless. Hawks don't dwell on that.

Ironically, the other hawkish charge is that the media is providing *too much* of an "overall, aggregate sense" of the war's progress—and that the media's overall sense is that the war is a disaster. "Now, I have to say that even I thought it would take the mainstream media more than a week to attempt to undermine the war effort," declared Rush Limbaugh last week. Wrote *National Review*'s David Frum, "To read the media commentary, you'd think that the Pentagon's less than perfect clairvoyance represents some terrible failure rather than the normal 'friction' of war."

To read Frum and other hawks, you'd think the press was concocting a story of U.S. military failure to suit its peacenik predispositions. And that's convenient, because journalists are a pathetically easy target (especially when you attack them as a group rather than naming individuals). But the media is simply the messenger. And attacking it has become a way for hawks to avoid confronting two, far more formidable foes: the uniformed military and the prewar expectations set by hawks themselves.

Conservatives hate getting into spats with the military, especially in wartime. But the glaring truth is that, in questioning the Bush administration's conduct of the war, reporters are relying overwhelmingly on the opinion of current and former military officers. If hawks really believe the current war plan has been unfairly maligned, the honest response would be for them to respond directly to its military critics—as Lawrence F. Kaplan does in this issue ("Strategic Attack," page 18)—either by defending the plan's assumptions or by defending the broader principle of civilian involvement in war planning. Instead, hawks have trained their fire on journalists, whose motives are easier to impugn.

But criticism from the military isn't the only thing fueling media skepticism about the success of the war. The other factor is hawks' own predictions of easy victory. As Dana Milbank recently showed in *The Washington Post*, Bush officials only began warning that the war could be long and difficult once war was a fait accompli. During most of the fall and winter, when the White House was still arguing for the war politically, administration officials suggested it would be relatively easy. Last September, Vice President Dick Cheney said, "You always plan for the worst," but "I don't think it would be that tough a fight." In March, he added that even "significant elements of the Republican Guard . . . are likely to step aside." Last summer, then–Chairman of the Defense Policy Board Richard Perle said, "Support for Saddam, including within his military organization, will collapse at the first whiff of gunpowder."

And hawks in the media mostly said the same thing. Indeed, they have admitted as much. While insisting that he himself always warned that an Iraq invasion could be difficult, *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol recently acknowledged that "some of my fellow hawks over the last six, nine months have been saying it's going to be a cakewalk." As *National Review Online*'s Stanley Kurtz put it last August, "Proponents of the war argue . . . that the military campaign will be quick and easy; that relatively few troops will be needed; that Saddam's forces will surrender to the inevitable." Nor was TNR exempt from this excessive optimism. An article in the magazine last September asked, "Will Saddam's troops fight?" The implicit answer was no.

The Rumsfeld war plan helped fuel this optimism. By calling for a rapid attack with relatively few troops, it bolstered hawkish predictions about the likely course of the war. When senior officers leaked that the war might require hundreds of thousands more troops than Rumsfeld wanted, hawks charged that the brass was doing so to forestall war. But this charge goes both ways. Hawks supported Rumsfeld's lower estimates because they made war more palatable and therefore more likely.

The predictions of easy victory had a powerful impact. Even many doves bought into the "cakewalk" thesis—and attacked the war for its likely political impact while implicitly conceding that it would be militarily easy. A *USA Today*/Gallup poll showed that one-third of Americans thought the war would produce fewer than 100 American casualties (in 1991, by contrast, polling found that Americans were far less optimistic). Hawks successfully created a set of expectations, and it is those expectations against which the media is now measuring the success of the war.

We could have taken a different path. Rather than claiming that Saddam's troops would surrender en masse, hawks could have made the more politically perilous claim that war might prove bloody and protracted but was worth it anyway. Once upon a time, conservatives scorned the Clinton administration for waging only cheap wars that cost little in blood and treasure. But, in the end, this much more ambitious war was also advertised largely as a sacrifice-free affair. I can't think of a single influential conservative who suggested that, to pay for it, Congress should scrap the tax cut. And I can't think of a single influential hawk who defended the military's more pessimistic estimates about the number of troops and the length of time the war would require.

I still believe the war will be vindicated. But it is proving harder and uglier than expected. And, if the media, and the public, were not prepared for the hard days that may lie ahead, it has little to do with spineless, irresolute reporters. The real blame lies with us hawks, who made our political work easier by selling the country a rosy war. And, for the time being at least, we are thus justly reaping what we sowed.

PETER BEINART

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Just the Facts

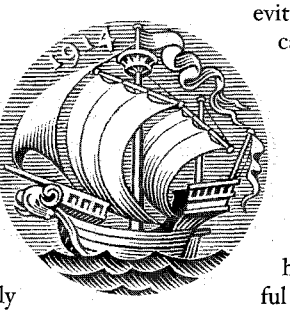
LAST FRIDAY MORNING, after a week of increasingly tough questioning from the White House press corps, a "senior administration official" took reporters aside to inform them that the president found many of their questions "silly." The president was experiencing "some level of frustration with the press corps for accounts questioning the war strategy," the official explained.

Not surprisingly, the conservative media was quick to take up the president's brief. "The style of political coverage, even from seasoned military correspondents, seems to be more adapted to the coverage of a political campaign or a domestic political controversy," Fox's Brit Hume complained two days later. *The Weekly Standard*'s Bill Kristol echoed the sentiment, grousing, "I really think the media coverage is now close to disgraceful."

On what, exactly, was this borderline disgraceful coverage based? Rumor? Enemy propaganda? Unconfirmed reports from the field? Actually, none of the above. To the extent reporters were questioning war strategy, they were largely reporting criticism by current and former Pentagon officials. Former Gulf war Commander Barry McCaffrey turned up in multiple news accounts complaining that the Pentagon had not allocated enough troops and firepower for the conflict in Iraq. Literally dozens of other officers seconded McCaffrey's critique, both on and off the record. Just a couple of hours before word of the president's media critique trickled out, Lieutenant General William Wallace, who currently commands the Army's 5th Corps, commented that "the enemy we're fighting is a bit different than the one we wargamed against."

In fact, though the administration and its allies have been quick to dismiss the grumbling as the same early nay-saying that accompanied military operations in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the distinctive feature of the skepticism this time around is that it is decidedly *not* the result of idle speculation by squeamish pundits. For example, Rush Limbaugh singled out an article by *The Washington Post*'s Thomas Ricks and argued, "If you read that [article], you conclude we're losing this war, that we've got no way out, that we are hemmed in, and we are hopelessly lost." But every one of Ricks's pessimistic assessments came from active or retired military personnel.

When pressed by a *New York Times* reporter to elaborate on his view of the media's role, Limbaugh conceded, "I don't think on balance this is any ideological expression on the part of most press people. They're oriented toward finding things that go wrong." Would that this were so. In fact, recent experience shows that the press, fearful of being branded unpatriotic, has a greater tendency to do exactly the opposite, credulously reporting the upbeat assessments offered by military officials—even assessments that are later revealed to be wrong. During the 1991 Gulf war, for example, the media followed the Pentagon's lead in grossly overhyping the Patriot missile's success at shooting down Iraqi Scuds. It was only after months of postwar investigation that the military finally conceded that it could cite only a handful of examples of a Patriot hitting its target.



If anything, this administration has been still more cavalier with the facts. The buildup to the war with Iraq saw the president and his top advisers make accusation after accusation that later proved suspect: The documents supporting the president's nationally televised claim that Iraq had attempted to buy uranium from Niger turned out to be forgeries; the aluminum tubes the president alleged Iraq was acquiring for uranium enrichment turned out to be unlikely candidates for that use; and the threat the president claimed Iraqi drones posed to the U.S. homeland turned out to be ridiculously overstated. (The drones can't travel more than a few hundred miles.) The administration's record during the first two weeks of fighting hasn't been much better. Among other exercises in hyperbole, Pentagon officials declared the southern Iraqi town of Umm Qasr under coalition control days before that was actually the case. They also touted the surrender of Iraq's 51st Division even though nothing of the kind had happened.

The administration shouldn't be held to an impossible standard. War is as confusing as it is violent, and a certain amount of misinformation is inevitable. But, by any objective calculation, this administration has enjoyed more favorable coverage than any military public affairs officer had a right to expect. (Even at the war's low points, the Pentagon's "embed" program has been fabulously successful at saturating newspapers and TV screens with heroic images of American soldiers.) Which suggests that what the administration's defenders want isn't thoughtful questioning; it's no questioning at all. Who would have thought that a group of people who are ideologically predisposed to merciless skepticism of government would propose abandoning that skepticism when the country needs it most? ■

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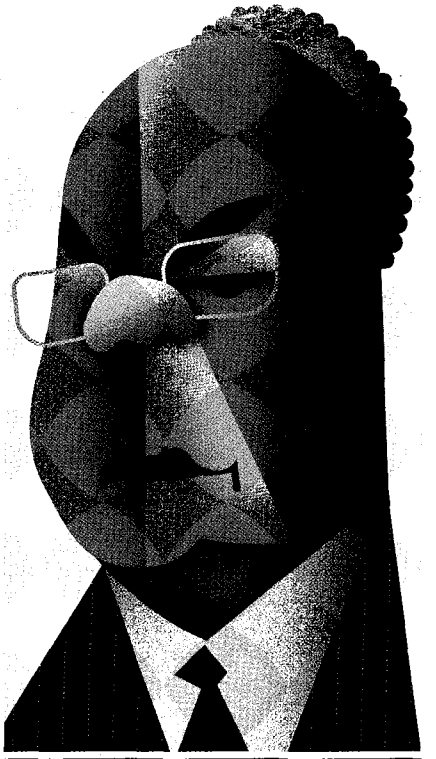
NOTEBOOK

POWELL GUARDS HIS FLANK . . . BUSH EXPOSES AMERICA'S

MR. RIGHT

CALL IT THE IRON LAW OF COLIN Powell: He never comes out on the losing side of an argument. He built his national reputation on his performance as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the Gulf war—despite the fact that he had opposed the war and was a chief advocate of leaving Saddam Hussein in power at its conclusion. This second war with Iraq has offered more of the same. Powell was the prime mover behind the administration's efforts at the United Nations, which, whatever their merits, were ultimately a debacle. Powell, however, managed to jump off that particular wagon instants before it crashed, abruptly becoming an advocate for U.S. action outside of the United Nations. (The rationale offered for his conversion was that he'd felt personally insulted by French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin.)

Now, with the Iraq war plan starting to run into trouble on the ground, Powell appears to be once again hedging his bets. Interviewed by CBS News on the morning of March 26, he called complaints that the coalition forces weren't large enough "nonsense," adding, "It's the usual chatter." But, when asked later the same day on National Public Radio whether he thought the war was going "astray," Powell responded with what appeared to be a swipe at Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and his neoconservative allies: "Some young men and women may be captured. Others may be missing, hopefully found later, but perhaps never found. . . . When war comes, that's the price that has to be paid. And it's paid not by intellectuals but by wonderful young Americans who are willing to serve their country." Two days later, when asked at a press briefing whether he'd "like to see the Powell Doctrine being implemented in the war in Iraq"—a question implicitly referring to the burgeoning debate between military brass and the civilians at the Pentagon—



Colin Powell

Powell sided with the former: "I have absolute confidence in the commanders who are running this war. . . . I trained them." So which side will Colin Powell ultimately wind up on? Presumably the winning one.

MAYBE YOUR FAMILY BUDGET, MR. SECRETARY

"A [WAR] PLAN IS LIKE A FAMILY budget. It's something someone sits down and devises and then never lives with."—Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, April 1

9/10 PRESIDENCY WATCH, CONT'D

AS JONATHAN CHAIT POINTED out last month ("The 9/10 President," March 10), George W. Bush has perfected a political two-step on homeland security: publicly asserting (and asserting and asserting) that protecting Americans from terrorism is now his "number-one priority" while privately shortchanging the very programs that would accomplish this in order to make room for his upper-bracket tax cuts. This week brought more of the same. Appearing at the Philadelphia waterfront before an audience filled with Coast Guard and Customs officials, Bush delivered a paean to the importance of port security: "More than ninety percent of our combat materials and our trade moves by sea. At this port alone, thousands of cargo containers arrive every day." For this reason, the president continued, "We are taking even greater security measures at our borders and ports."

Really? Despite a $67 million request, Bush gave no money in his 2003 budget to Customs' vanguard Container Security Initiative (CSI), which helps screen cargo at foreign ports. Worse, last summer, Bush vetoed $39 million for CSI, and his recent $75 billion wartime budget supplement does not award CSI a single dime. Bush's 2003 budget, 2004 budget, and his wartime supplement also allot a grand total of zero for port-security grants. And, when Representative John Spratt introduced a $1.5 billion port-security budget amendment in the House a couple of weeks ago, Republicans killed it with Bush's tacit imprimatur. The Coast Guard estimates that it will cost $1 billion to secure U.S. ports immediately and another $4.5 billion over the next ten years. Yet they've seen a mere $318 million since the terrorist attacks. Because of such skimpy funding, the Coast Guard has completed vulnerability assessments at only eight of the 350 U.S. ports—and at just three of the top 25 ports. At these funding levels, the Coast Guard will not be able to carry out such assessments at the 55 largest ports until 2009. In Philadelphia, Bush declared, "In this time of war, the Coast Guard's service in America's waters is more important than ever. . . . Your job of protecting our nation's ports is essential to our economic security and to our

DAVID COWLES

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national security." Too bad they're doing that job without much help from the White House.

CHECKPOINT

THE EPISODE OCCURRED AT A roadblock on Monday. Soldiers had tried to wave down a moving van. The driver did not stop. The troops then fired two warning shots. But the driver still did not bring his van to a halt. On heightened alert to protect themselves and their comrades from suicide bombers, the soldiers manning the checkpoint fired off rounds of ammunition. The vehicle came to a halt, and inside were seven dead women and children. No, this did not happen near Nablus; it happened near Najaf. Not close to the borders of Israel but inside Iraq. The soldiers were not from the Israel Defense Forces; they were Americans. And the dead were not Palestinians but Iraqis. This kind of incident often provokes State Department spokesman Richard Boucher to remonstrate with Israel about its supposed callousness in dealing with Palestinian civilians. But callousness is really not the issue. Shia clerics in Iraq revealed this week that the passengers in the van were there under compulsion and that the driver was instructed by Iraqi officers to run the checkpoint. Like the Palestinian militias, Iraqi combatants routinely behave in ways that imperil their own ordinary and nonbelligerent populace. Sadly, Americans now understand what it is like to fight such an enemy. Let's hope Boucher remembers in the future.

ESSENTIAL READING

IN THESE DAYS OF ROILED DIScussion about the state of the world, we are delighted to announce the publication, and thereby to bask in the glory, of Robert Kagan's *Of Paradise and Power: Europe and America in the New World Order* (Knopf) and Paul Berman's *Terror and Liberalism* (Norton). Both of these books have already provoked much debate, and together the two writers represent an admirable convergence of intellectuals from both sides of the ideological spectrum, both of them contributing editors to this magazine, in the great enterprise of explaining the justice of the U.S. war against terrorism and theocracy and fascism.

DEPT. OF CORRECTIONS

IN LAST WEEK'S ISSUE, THE MAGAzine implied that Ali Bapir, the leader of Komal, was also a leader of Ansar Al Islam, and stated that he vowed to join with Ansar after the American bombing of Komal's political offices in the third week of March (see Elizabeth Rubin, "Second Front," April 7). Neither is the case. Also, the name of the Kurdish Socialist Party leader is Kak Hama, not Kakar. We regret the errors. ■

Inside the Box | Bruce Reed

SHOCK AND PAUSE Bush prepares nation for the war becoming tougher: "There will be no cakewalks as long as I'm in charge!"

WATCH MAN A week after saying Bush was above watching war on TV, aides say he's an engaged commander glued to the set. Next week's spin: Sometimes Bush overrules Condi and controls the remote himself.

THANK THE ACADEMY Iraqis prepared for U.S. invasion by watching *Black Hawk Down*. Two thumbs up from Uday and Qusay: "It was almost as good as the Oscars!"

BLACK HAWK DOWN: ZUMA PRESS; RIDGE: REUTERS PHOTO ARCHIVE

THE WILLING Bush says we've got "a huge coalition" that's even bigger than in 1991: "And that's just counting protesters!"

CONFLICT OF INTEREST Congress leaves Ridge out of line of presidential succession: "That's not the kind of bureaucratic reorganization we had in mind."

HOSTILE TERRITORY American troops were led to believe Iraqis would welcome them with flags and cheers: "If we wanted this kind of greeting, we could have marched at home."

SINGLE PAYER Bush proposes universal health care for Iraq. Democrats' reaction: "Hey, that's our argument for regime change."

ACTION FIGURE Hasbro studies war for toy ideas. New this Christmas: G.I. Joe's embedded-reporter friend "David."

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Who are the Fedayeen Saddam?

Secret Service

BY RYAN LIZZA

IN THE FIRST days of the war, the Fedayeen Saddam shattered hawks' cakewalk predictions by harassing American troops and supply lines with guerrilla tactics. In his now-famous comment to reporters, Lieutenant General William Wallace, the U.S. Army commander in Iraq, said, "The enemy we're fighting is a bit different than the one we war-gamed against because of these [fedayeen] paramilitary forces."

American officials shouldn't have been that surprised. Indeed, one prominent official darkly warned the Pentagon about the fedayeen: Saddam Hussein. Prior to the war, Iraqi television regularly featured reports about the fedayeen and even described in fairly plain terms how they would fight. On Army Day in Iraq, January 6, Saddam gave a long, rambling speech about the coming war not to generals from the Republican Guard but to an audience of what Iraqi television called "the fedayeen's staff officers and commanders of units." The following month, state television reported another meeting between Saddam and his fedayeen leadership in which they briefed him on "their huge capabilities for combat, deployment, maneuvering and attacking, and wiping out the enemy forces." Saddam was told the paramilitaries would be "using methods that are unfamiliar" to the Americans. Another Iraqi TV report was even more prescient: It noted that, in a meeting with Saddam's militia, commanders promised the fedayeen would "launch surprise raids on the remnants of the enemies."

Looking back at what was known about Iraqi fedayeen plans, the guerrilla tactics should hardly be a surprise, at least to experts on Iraq. To be sure, Saddam rambles on Iraqi television for hours about many subjects—but few have been as prominent as the fedayeen. Yet there was shock and awe in Washington over the fedayeen's use of suicide bombers last weekend at a military checkpoint in southern Iraq, with some commentators even suggesting that this finally proves Saddam supports terrorism. But the Iraqi regime has publicly supported suicidal terrorism for years. In Iraqi military parades, the regime has frequently highlighted the suicide squad of the Fedayeen Saddam, a corps of young Iraqis known as "the ghosts" who usually march in white shrouds with explosive belts strapped to their chests. Certainly Dick Cheney shouldn't be surprised. He noted in a speech last year, "Baghdad has publicly claimed to have a suicide-terrorist capability in an organization called the Fedayeen Saddam." Indeed, the Pentagon even confronted such tactics in its own war games. During a massive military war-game exercise last year, the "enemy" (read: Iraq) used suicide attacks to sink U.S. ships and other unconventional methods to thwart U.S. technological advantages; American officials responded by crying foul, unsinking the vessels, and restarting the game.

Some other guerrilla-warfare tactics employed by the fedayeen shouldn't have been a mystery, either. In several clips of a fedayeen training video played on Iraqi television before the war, militiamen are shown practicing urban-combat military exercises. Another clip shows three fedayeen hidden in a canopy of green, mossy camouflage. The men, seemingly dressed as civilians, suddenly leap out and ambush a group of uniformed soldiers.

While the cakewalk hawks who predicted little or no opposition from Iraqis and rarely engaged in discussions about the costs of the war have apparently never heard of the fedayeen, others were prophetic in their warnings. Liberal hawk Kenneth Pollack, whose prewar analysis has thus far proved more accurate than any other commentator, warned in his book *The Threatening Storm* that the fedayeen were "a force to be reckoned with." Yossef Bodansky, the director of the congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, also predicted the guerrilla attacks in an article for the journal *Defense & Foreign Affairs' Strategic Policy*. While many analysts assumed that Saddam would keep his militiamen closer to Baghdad, Bodansky argued that they would actually be sprinkled across a defensive zone covering almost every Shia city from the Kuwaiti border to the Republican Guard units protecting the southern approach to Baghdad.

WHILE MANY ARE surprised that Saddam's brutal paramilitary forces are doing what the regime said they would do to American forces, others are stunned to learn how effective their control is over the Shia. As some hawks have now admitted, there was always a contradiction between claiming that Iraq was a totalitarian state where the Baathists held an iron grip over people's lives and claiming that ordinary Iraqis would effortlessly rise up against those Baathists at the first whiff of U.S. gunpowder.

In hindsight, it seems obvious that the fedayeen would have some success in terrorizing the anti-Saddam southern Shia into quiescence. Since the Gulf war, the mission of Saddam's security forces has been to prevent a repeat of the 1991 Shia intifada that almost overthrew the regime. The Fedayeen Saddam—founded in late 1994 by Saddam's deranged son Uday—are key to this goal. Jamal Al Qurairy, an Iraqi defector who presided over mass executions of Shia in 1991, and who says he was instrumental in organizing and training the fedayeen, recently told a London newspaper, "[T]he training had a central emphasis—how to surround and control a city." The newspaper added that Al Qurairy said the fedayeen's mission was "to use all means possible 'to protect Iraqi cities from an urban uprising' and to crush it should it begin. In the event of a foreign attack, the Fedayeen was tasked to fight for Iraqi cities block by block." (The CIA debriefed the defector, but he claims they seemed less than interested in his information.)

Nor were the fedayeen's exploits in Iraq in the '90s hidden from the outside world. In 1995, the fedayeen were used to

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quell a revolt actually staged by Sunnis, the branch of Islam from which Saddam and his power base come. Sunni tribesmen in a city west of Baghdad were reportedly upset that the regime had sent the mutilated body of a mutinous air force officer back home to their city. One tactic used by the fedayeen to put down the disturbance was to hold hostage the wives and daughters of some of the tribesmen until they gave up. In 1998, the fedayeen poured into Karbala after an assassination attempt on Izzat Ibrahim, the number-two man in Iraq. The militia arrested dozens of Shia. The following year, the fedayeen crushed the most widespread Shia uprising in Iraq since the 1991 intifada. It began when the regime assassinated the country's top Shia cleric, Ayatollah Mohammad Sadek Al Sadr, who had called for the release of jailed religious leaders. In Baghdad, the fedayeen reportedly sealed off Shia sections of the city to prevent riots from spreading. In Najaf, where the assassination occurred, militiamen used a more devious method to control the population: According to a witness interviewed by the British newspaper *The Independent*, security forces stormed through the town in gas masks and chemical-warfare suits terrorizing the residents—who are keenly aware of Saddam's use of chemical weapons against other dissident minorities in Iraq—into thinking a poison-gas attack was imminent. This tactic could explain the presence of all those chemical-warfare suits found recently in Nasiriyah. They may be there to intimidate the Shia population rather than to protect Iraqi forces from actual chemical weapons.

In another widely reported operation aimed at terrifying potential dissidents, in 2000 the fedayeen began publicly beheading some 200 women who the regime claimed were prostitutes but who were mostly political opponents. Often, a victim's severed head was dropped on her family's doorstep. In some cases, the family was even forced to display the head outside their home for several days. It's not surprising, then, that, in the run-up to the war, fedayeen in the south warned the Shia and potential army deserters that they would be killed if they turned against the regime. Fedayeen confiscated the leaflets dropped by the United States, and, as paramilitaries began to occupy cities just before the war, they announced through loudspeakers that unusual activity or disobedience would be met with death. All this suggests that, while the predictions of an immediate uprising in the south were too optimistic—many simply didn't take into account the terror instilled in the Shia by the fedayeen and the Baathists—some of the current pessimism is also off the mark. In one of the most prescient prewar comments, an Iraqi Shia told *The Washington Post* in January, "When we are sure that Saddam's security apparatus has collapsed, we will arise. But not before."

One final surprise has been the fedayeen's suicidal loyalty to the regime. Many expected the sort of mass surrenders that we saw in 1991, when conscripted Iraqi soldiers gave themselves up to TV crews. But the fedayeen have been indoctrinated and welded to the regime in a manner that didn't exist before the Gulf war. Uday has often recruited desperate men from orphanages or prisons. As the fedayeen became more professionalized, he recruited only Sunnis from the central Iraq tribes most loyal to Saddam. The men are paid salaries many times higher than other government workers. They are given land, free health care, and extra food rations, all enormous perks considering the sanctions against Iraq. And they know they have no future without Saddam.

In the mid-'90s, the government also started a frightening program called Saddam's Lion Cubs (Ashbal Saddam), a military training camp for children as young as ten. The Cubs spend a month of their summer vacation enduring 14-hour days of small-arms training and political indoctrination. A recent Brookings Institute report notes the kids are trained in "techniques intended to desensitize the youth to violence, including frequent beatings and deliberate cruelty to animals." The best of the Cubs are asked to join the Fedayeen Saddam. The climax of the Fedayeen Saddam's training is an initiation ceremony where dozens of half-naked trainees rip apart a large dog and eat its innards with their bare hands. The blood-soaked men jump about, tearing at the dog as they shout in rhythmic unison, "Our souls and blood we sacrifice for you, Saddam!" We should not be all that shocked at this either. A video of the ceremony was played regularly on Iraqi television. ■

Why Bush is losing at home.

Domestic Abuse

BY JONATHAN KARL

BLEARY-EYED C-SPAN junkies witnessed quite a scene at 3 o'clock in the morning on March 21. Democrat Rahm Emanuel was in a frenzy, acting more like a freshman at a college basketball game than a freshman congressman on the House floor, leaping into the air and flailing his arms, screaming for the gavel to fall. Time for voting on the budget had expired, and Democrats seemed to have achieved, by a one-vote margin, a knockout blow to the president's tax cut. But, despite Emanuel's theatrics, the gavel would not come down for several more minutes, giving the GOP time to scrounge for the votes they needed; when the gavel finally fell, Republicans delivered a 215-to-212 victory for the president.

The victory was made possible only because five Democrats missed the vote. One said he had been busy babysitting. Another was in Colorado, snowed in. Yet another, Karen McCarthy of Missouri, was at the hospital recovering from injuries she had suffered in a fall a few hours earlier. (The next morning, McCarthy put out a statement saying she would seek treatment for an alcohol problem.) Why was the vote in the usually reliable GOP House so hard? Because, all of a sudden, virtually *everything* domestic has become hard

Jonathan Karl is a CNN congressional correspondent.

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for Bush's wartime presidency. Even as the commander-in-chief is enjoying near lockstep support for the war, his domestic agenda is stalled in Congress.

ON THE WAR, congressional Democratic dissent is virtually nonexistent. At a hearing on the administration's request for $75 billion to pay for Iraq, Democrat Fritz Hollings told Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, "Mr. Secretary, don't worry about the money, you know and I know that you're going to get the money." Even Senator Tom Daschle, who lashed out at the president for failing "so miserably" at diplomacy two days before the first bombs fell on Baghdad, now reserves his comments on the war to supporting the troops and backtracking from his earlier criticism of the commander-in-chief. "I don't think the timing of those comments was necessarily the best," Daschle told reporters in South Dakota last week.

On the domestic front, however, it's a different story. Following his reassurances to Rumsfeld, Hollings went on to lecture the defense secretary about Karl Rove and the evils of a wartime tax cut. For his part, Daschle has proved just as effective as minority leader in blocking the president's agenda as he was when he was majority leader and Republicans were deriding him as the obstructionist leader of the "Daschle Democrats."

This is not the way it was supposed to happen. President Bush had supposedly learned the lessons of his father, who squandered a historic opportunity in 1991 by failing to use his post–Gulf war popularity to push for anything significant on the domestic front. To avoid that mistake, George W. Bush outlined an ambitious domestic agenda in his State of the Union address even as he made the case for action against Iraq. According to the Republican playbook, his wartime popularity combined with the newly won GOP control of the Senate would boost his bold domestic agenda.

But Republican strategists on Capitol Hill now doubt that even a decisive victory in Iraq will translate into success at home. In large part that's because they can no longer count on moderate Republicans to line up behind them. "They are hot to spend the president's political capital because they don't want forty-three to repeat the mistakes of forty-one," a senior Republican leadership aide says of the White House team. "But winning the war will have little impact on the calculus up here. He's going to have to use a lot of that capital on our guys," meaning moderate Senate Republicans.

This became evident when, after its narrow victory in the House, the president's economic plan took a beating in the Senate as three Republicans—Lincoln Chafee, George Voinovich, and Olympia Snowe—joined Democrats to slash the president's $726 billion tax cut by more than half. The defeat was a shock to Republicans who thought they had beaten back the effort to decimate the tax cut. The setback reflects the staggering difference between the popularity of the president and his economic plan. A recent NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll put the president's approval rating at 66 percent, but only 38 percent said Congress should pass his tax cut. And moderates didn't only defy their popular wartime president on tax cuts; they are also defying him on a host of other domestic proposals. On the plan to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), the stars seemed aligned for a Republican victory: The plan was defeated last year when Democrats controlled the Senate and should have had a better chance this year with the Republicans back in control. And the one-two punch of rising oil prices and instability in the Middle East played into the argument for more domestic drilling. On this one, sloppy vote-counting may have contributed to the Republican defeat. Oregon Republican Gordon Smith says he told the Republican leadership to talk to him if they needed his vote: "I said, 'If I am the difference, talk to me.' They took that to mean, 'You've got my vote if you need it.' " But apparently no one from the administration bothered to negotiate for his support. Smith voted no, and so did newly minted Republican Senator Norm Coleman and six other moderates who apparently felt that on ANWR it was more important to be on the right side of environmental groups than the Bush White House.

The Republican leadership seethed with anger over ANWR. On the Senate floor, Appropriations Chairman Ted Stevens issued the kind of threat rarely uttered by a senator in public: "In the time I have served here, many people have made commitments to me, and I have never broken a commitment in my life," he thundered. "I make this commitment: People who vote against this today are voting against me, and I will not forget it." But even the threatened wrath of the appropriations chairman couldn't deliver the Republican votes the president needed.

The domestic agenda is stalled almost everywhere else as well. Visions of sweeping Medicare reform have faded in the face of opposition from squeamish Republicans who don't want to be accused of forcing seniors into managed care. Bush's faith-based initiative to involve religious organizations in government-funded social work has been gutted. Malpractice reform is languishing. Even the popular $15 billion initiative to fight AIDS in Africa has been delayed, caught in the crossfire of abortion politics. Most dramatically, the failure to confirm circuit court nominee Miguel Estrada shows that Democrats can be almost as effective in blocking judicial nominees as they were when Patrick Leahy was chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

WHILE THE AGENDA stagnates, hardly a day goes by without Congress voting some form of support for the commander-in-chief and his troops. On March 17, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to declare it a day of fasting and prayer to support the troops, but the vote didn't take place until 7:30 p.m., making it relatively easy to get in three square meals before beginning to fast. On March 27, the House passed, by a vote of 346 to 49, their resolution "[r]ecognizing the public need for fasting and prayer in order to secure the blessings and protection of Providence for the people of the United States and our Armed Forces." They've also passed tax cuts for the troops and resolutions praising Prime Minister Tony Blair and condemn-

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ing Iraqi treatment of American POWs. While Medicare reform stalls, a proposal to give a Congressional Gold Medal to Blair is on the fast track. A timely victory in Iraq might even give Republicans a window of opportunity to eke out a victory or two on the domestic front, but the window won't stay open long. "We've got about five months, and then the year is over," says Senator Trent Lott. "Come September, the election is on." Republicans hold out little hope of getting anything substantial through the Senate as the 2004 presidential campaign heats up.

Republicans still have reason to be confident that they will eventually be able pass a tax cut large enough to declare at least partial victory for the president's economic plan (less than the $726 billion tax cut Bush wants but more than the $350 billion Senate moderates say they can live with). They may also pass a prescription-drug benefit for Medicare but without the reform the president says must accompany one. That would be a victory, but it would be a hollow one for Republicans who hoped to be able to use a new prescription-drug benefit as leverage to control the cost of Medicare. "The feeling is, if granny gets her pills and the economy is growing, we win in 2004," says a conservative Republican strategist. That may be right, but compared with the Bush administration's grand foreign policy goals, these domestic ones look pretty modest indeed. ■

Look who's studying Jenin.

Camp Fire

BY HASSAN NOURI

LAST SEPTEMBER, Martin Van Creveld, Israel's foremost military historian, landed in North Carolina for an unlikely assignment. He'd been invited by the U.S. Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune to discuss his research on urban combat and his thoughts on the possibility of guerrilla warfare in Iraq. Yet the American officers assembled for Van Creveld's lecture were interested less in tales of wars past than in what had just happened during the eleven-day siege of the West Bank town of Jenin, which left 23 Israeli troops and 52 Palestinian gunmen and civilians dead. How, the Marines wondered, did the Israeli army rout out a seeming hornet's nest of gunmen with such limited loss of life?

The U.S. military were not the only ones studying Jenin. A high-level member in the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) claims that, in December 2002, representatives of the Iraqi secret police started asking questions about the siege of Jenin. In December, he says, they are believed to have requested that insiders of the groups that took part in the siege draft reports about the events that occurred at the refugee camp in that town. If true, the Iraqis' main interest was determining how an outgunned, ragtag band of resistance fighters kept 1,500 Israeli troops at bay for days while holed up in the refugee camp.

In the battle for Baghdad, all roads lead through Jenin. Unfortunately for the United States, the lessons both sides learned from that battle—even the lessons of the Israelis' apparent victory—suggest that urban combat is a tactical and p.r. nightmare for an army focused on upholding human rights.

One of the largest urban-warfare operations in decades, Jenin has become a case study for the Pentagon. In recent months, American troops have requested as much information as they can get on Israel's operations in Jenin. Members of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) are reported to have trained U.S. Marines in a camp designed like an Arab city—with narrow alleys, high-rises, and a casbah. Residents of Jenin say they have watched a stream of U.S. Marines coming through to study the town in recent weeks, some showing up even since the war with Iraq began. The Pentagon and the IDF will not comment on the reports but do note that there is constant cooperation between the two forces. "There is a clear link in all this," says Yagil Henkin, a military historian and a reservist in the IDF history department.

The Marines cannot be heartened by what they hear from the IDF. About 14,000 Palestinians—the vast majority civilians—lived door-to-door in a space of only 100 acres square in Jenin. But concealed among them were over 100 militants from the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas, who planned and organized suicide operations and shootings from inside the camp responsible for killing at least 70 Israelis across the country during March 2002 alone, according to a Human Rights Watch report. On two separate occasions, in fact, Israeli troops went into the camp to make arrests only to be run out by heavy fire. In response, on April 3, 2002, the IDF forcefully rolled in with tanks and helicopters. The Palestinian fighters had made preparations of their own, setting up positions around the perimeter of the camp and inside it, with booby traps along streets and in homes, tunnels between different homes, and stockpiles of weapons.

For the first two days after the IDF assault, the troops pushed the Palestinian gunmen deeper into the camp. But, by the third day, the fighters had dug in, with the IDF unable to use air strikes against them for fear of killing massive numbers of civilians. Instead, the Israelis brought in massive bulldozers to drive a wide path through the camp and helicopters to pick off snipers. They plowed a wide swath right through the camp and moved door-to-door, eventually routing out the gunmen. Even with the bulldozers, the IDF forces later said, the Jenin battle was one of the toughest of the 30-month intifada.

Though bloody, Jenin offers only a taste of what the United States will face in the alleyways and streets of Baghdad. "Saddam [Hussein] himself said that the Americans will face the same quagmire that Israel did in Jenin," says Jamal Shati Al Hindi, a Fatah Jenin representative on the Palestinian

Hassan Nouri is a pseudonym for a reporter based in Jerusalem.

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Legislative Council and a member of the council's Refugee and Diaspora Committee. Henkin concurs: "Jenin is exactly what the Americans want to avoid. Just think about having three hundred Jenins" in Baghdad, a city more than 100 times larger than the refugee camp.

To be sure, in Baghdad, Iraqi fighters may not be able to draw upon the support of the local population, as Palestinian gunmen did in Jenin. There, nearly all the inhabitants of the camp openly supported the fighters; but significant uncertainty remains about the depth of public support for Saddam's troops and irregulars, calling into question whether Iraqis fighting in Baghdad might have to face not only the U.S. military but also hostile civilians. Other lessons from Jenin are still more foreboding. Saddam's gunmen may be able to blend into the Baghdad population and then fire at American troops at will, and, if the United States fights back, killing civilians, the Iraqis may broadcast the deaths to the global media.

According to Arab media reports, Palestinians who fought Israeli forces in Jenin have been phoning acquaintances in Iraq to advise them on tactics for battling American and British forces if street fighting does commence. "Despite all their tanks and arms, [the Palestinian gunmen] shook [Israel's] military infrastructure," says Hindi. Henkin agrees. "The [siege] was hardest for the Israelis and easiest for the Palestinians," he says. "The Iraqis will probably try to replicate Jenin, and every civilian killed will be a victory for them."

Indeed, the high-level member of the P.A. emphasized that the reports requested by Saddam's men in December examined how the Jenin gunmen managed to ingratiate themselves with residents in the camp and how different Palestinian groups worked together to create a united front capable of resisting Israeli attacks for an extended period of time. Worse, while Palestinian gunmen were poorly armed, the Iraqis have far heavier weaponry. The Palestinians "were basically empty-handed," says Van Creveld. "You might almost compare [Jenin] to the Warsaw ghetto. But, in Baghdad, the Americans will meet massive resistance from tens of thousands of [militiamen] with no end of military weapons."

To battle this resistance, Van Creveld says, the Pentagon will need far more troops on the ground before even considering significant urban attacks. In the close quarters and high-rises of Baghdad, where air power and other modern weaponry are rendered relatively useless, numbers count far more than high-tech arms. Military theory suggests that the ratio of troops to gunmen should be at least six to one, Van Creveld says, and, for the time being, the United States simply doesn't have the numbers to go into Baghdad and other cities.

What's more, though the Marines are studying the Israelis' use of bulldozers as an effective tool in urban combat, Jenin also shows how using bulldozers can backfire. Van Creveld notes, when he went to Camp Lejeune, "One thing they thought was interesting was . . . the use of the bulldozers to bring down houses and to clear the streets." Indeed, the 50-ton tractors built for mining and moving mountains were critical for clearing out alleyways and driving a wide road through the camp for Israeli tanks and vehicles. The Pentagon reportedly has recently bought nine of the bulldozers from the Israelis for use in Iraq.

But, even in victory, the Israelis lost politically. While the bulldozers did destroy the hornet's nest of gunmen, the rubble left behind suggested unnecessary use of force and spawned investigations of war crimes. And, though independent human rights groups have said that no massacre occurred in Jenin, the use of bulldozers and the door-to-door fighting destroyed nearly half the camp, producing a wave of anti-Israel headlines in the world press and condemnation from foreign governments. In the process, Jenin became a household word for anti-Israel protesters and a rallying cry for the intifada itself. To emphasize the fact, residents of Jenin commemorated the one-year anniversary of the siege last week by paying tribute to Iraq. Among the ceremonies was the renaming of a square in Jenin in the name of the suicide bomber who killed four American troops last Saturday. "I think the real lesson of Jenin is that you can win the battle and still lose the war," says Van Creveld. Or, in the case of Baghdad, you could lose both. ■

Jerusalem Dispatch

Prime Time

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

AT THE END of February, with war in Iraq looming, U.N. Middle East envoy Terje Roed-Larsen paid a visit to Yasir Arafat in his shattered compound in Ramallah. For months, the Palestinian leader had believed the outbreak of war would work to his advantage, restoring him as a key player in peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. But Roed-Larsen laid it on the line: According to diplomatic sources, he told Arafat that the Palestinian leader would be "finished" unless he immediately appointed a prime minister with substantial powers—a precondition set by Ariel Sharon and the White House for restarting the peace process. Weeks later, Arafat grudgingly named his aide, Mahmoud Abbas, known by the nom de guerre Abu Mazen, to the post. Then, in dozens of phone conversations and meetings in smoke-filled rooms in Ramallah over the next two weeks, reformers from the Fatah movement, a faction within the Palestinian Authority (P.A.), persuaded key Arafat loyalists to block Arafat's bid to retain de facto control of the P.A. On March 18, the Palestinian Legislative Council rejected by an overwhelming majority Arafat's attempt to weaken the post, giving Abu Mazen total control over Cabinet appointments and other key

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responsibilities. "It was a democratic revolution," says Mohammed Hurani, a Fatah deputy who organized the rebellion.

The sidelining of Arafat and the ascension of Abu Mazen have both been hailed as a critical boost to the "road map," the Middle East peace plan drafted last year by the diplomatic quartet comprising the European Union, the United Nations, Russia, and the United States. Loosely based on a June 24, 2002, speech given by George W. Bush outlining his vision for two states living side by side in peace and security, the six-page document sets forth a series of confidence-building moves to be carried out by the Israeli government and the P.A. Phase one will include the dismantling of illegal Israeli settlements and the seizing of weapons from Palestinian militants. Phase two will establish a provisional Palestinian state by the end of this year. The final phase calls for the creation of a permanent Palestinian state by 2005. Last week, Bush and Prime Minister Tony Blair both pledged to support the road map, and the quartet plans to officially present the document to the Israelis and Palestinians as soon as Abu Mazen forms his new government, probably by the end of this month. "For the first time in two and a half years, we have a real chance to find a solution," Roed-Larsen told me last week when I visited him at the palatial U.N. headquarters in Jerusalem.

Yet, even before the road map gets off the ground, it is facing withering skepticism from all sides. Despite Bush's public endorsement, according to U.N. officials, top White House officials, such as Dick Cheney, have been lukewarm toward the plan because they believe it does not make security for Israel the top priority, and they have sparred with the State Department, the key participant with the United Nations in the drafting of the document. Sharon's government has raised dozens of objections, including the plan's call for the creation of an "independent" Palestinian state. But the biggest short-term obstacle may be the very phenomenon that gave the road map momentum: the war in Iraq.

IF THE DRIVE by coalition forces toward Baghdad bogs down, observers fear, Bush is unlikely to expend the time or the political capital to make the quartet's vision a reality. That's because the war could preoccupy the White House to such an extent that it would not be able to get involved in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which needs direct U.S. presidential pressure to flourish. Moreover, the hostilities in Iraq have enraged the Arab street, and the prospect of a drawn-out war could mean that Hamas and Islamic Jihad intensify their terror in a bid to exploit the unrest. This week's attack outside a Netanya café by an Islamic Jihad suicide bomber, who injured dozens of Israelis and killed himself in solidarity with pro–Saddam Hussein fedayeen, is an ominous sign that the radicals are preparing just such a campaign. A new wave of attacks would harden Israeli resistance to the peace process and undermine the credibility of Abu Mazen, who is trying to persuade the militants to lay down their arms.

For the moment, Sharon is expressing cautious support for Abu Mazen. Israel once denounced him for "supporting terrorism" and vilified him as a "Holocaust denier." But the Israel Defense Forces have removed from their website excerpts from a book about Abu Mazen published in the early '80s based on his dissertation from Moscow's Oriental College in which he questioned whether the Nazis had used gas chambers and claimed that fewer than one million Jews were exterminated during the Holocaust. Israeli Director of Military Intelligence Major General Aharon Ze'evi Farkash told the Israeli Cabinet last weekend that he discerns "an authentic and positive desire for change" in Abu Mazen, the only member of Arafat's inner circle who has consistently spoken out against the intifada. Sharon's top aide, Ephraim Halevy, has held at least one private meeting with the new prime minister, and one member of the diplomatic quartet that drew up the road map predicts that Sharon and Abu Mazen will have their first meeting in the coming weeks.

But the honeymoon could end quickly. Abu Mazen has begun holding talks with leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in an effort to induce them to declare a cease-fire. Both Palestinians and Western diplomats, however, say that the rejectionists still have the upper hand. Disarming the militants, a key initial component of the road map, may prove to be far too ambitious a goal. "I can't see them giving up their guns," a European envoy who talks frequently to Hamas told me. The appointment of a strong Palestinian interior minister could intensify pressure on the radicals: One leading candidate is Mohammed Dahlan, the former preventive security chief in the Gaza Strip, who argued that the uprising was destroying the P.A. and who resigned his post last year. But Hamas and Islamic Jihad still enjoy strong support among Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, and any attempted crackdown against the militants is certain to backfire unless the Israeli government makes some substantial concessions of its own. "Abu Mazen has to show his people that the Israelis are freeing prisoners, withdrawing from the occupied territories, and stopping house demolitions," Roed-Larsen told me. "And he has to show Israel and the United States that there is no more terror."

The White House has begun quietly pressing Sharon to bolster Abu Mazen. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell and national security adviser Condoleezza Rice told Israeli Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom in Washington on Monday that the Israeli government needs to make immediate moves to rebuild confidence with the Palestinians, such as removing roadblocks in the West Bank and dismantling settlement outposts. And Sharon has begun to face pressure from within his own fractious government: Israel's Infrastructure Minister Joseph Paritzky (the leading dove in the secular Shinui Party, the second-largest member of Sharon's coalition) told Israeli reporters Monday that he had just received a list of illegal outposts from the Israeli group Peace Now and had ordered the electrical company to cut off power to them.

Yet, despite such pressures—and even if the Iraq war ends quickly—most Palestinians and Israelis I talked to aren't optimistic about the prospects for peace. Sharon's requirement of a total cessation of violence before substantial negotiations can begin may be unattainable. "All you need is one idiot in Gaza, that's enough to derail the process," says Yossi Beilin,

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former minister of justice in Ehud Barak's government and a member of the Israeli negotiating teams at Oslo and Taba. Sharon's opposition to surrendering settlements also makes it unlikely that the road map will move beyond phase one, which calls upon Israel to take down outposts built after March 2001 and declare a settlement freeze. Even if the two sides progress past the first phase, most observers expect negotiations to bog down over the boundaries of a provisional Palestinian state. Foreign Minister Shalom said this week that Israel will give Abu Mazen one or two months to prove he can stop terrorist attacks—something that Palestinians close to the new prime minister say will be difficult. After two and a half years of suspicion and intransigence on both sides, most peace-process veterans I spoke with believe that the road map will end up like all the other peace initiatives of the last two years: a long detour to nowhere. ■

Treasury's kid gloves.

Laundry Bag

BY HUDSON MORGAN

LAST MONTH, THE Treasury Department announced the formation of an executive office dedicated to combating terrorist financing. In an accompanying statement, Treasury Secretary John Snow declared, "Stopping the flow of money to terrorist groups is a top Treasury Department priority." Confirmed Treasury General Counsel David Aufhauser in recent Senate testimony, "You can stop the killing if you can stop the flow of money."

Problem is, the administration has been saying that for a long time. As far back as October 2001, in the USA Patriot Act, Congress furnished Treasury with anti-money-laundering "special measures" to prosecute terrorist financing in countries with lax banking regulations—such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates—and even to bar any bank, charity, business, or country that represents a money-laundering risk from using U.S. markets. But, for all of the administration's noise about starving terrorists of funding, Treasury has invoked its new powers just twice in the past 18 months—against Ukraine and Nauru, and neither case was related to terrorist financing. Astonishingly, it has yet to deploy them against a single bank in the Middle East.

Crafted to harness U.S. economic clout as a weapon in the war on terrorism, the Patriot Act's anti-laundering special measures—bundled in "Section 311"—represent potentially seminal national security legislation. Experts estimate that terrorists launder hundreds of millions of dollars through U.S. banks annually. (Osama bin Laden boasted to the Pakistani paper *Karachi Ummat* in fall 2001 that his henchmen are "aware of the cracks inside the Western financial system as they are aware of the lines in their hands.") As Rachel Ehrenfeld, author of the forthcoming book *Funding Evil*, told TNR, "Money laundering is a major tool for terrorist funding, and many of the people who fund terrorists—particularly the Saudis—are financially savvy and know what channels to use to skirt the law."

The Patriot Act authorized Treasury to seal those channels by requiring domestic and foreign financial institutions—banks, charities, securities firms, currency exchanges, pawnbrokers, casinos, and even jewel dealers—to tighten their anti-laundering controls. Under Section 311, Treasury can now ask any foreign institution to divulge account and transaction information, establish independent oversight, and invest in money-monitoring technology—or face exile from the U.S. financial system. Even *hawala*, an underground money-transfer method that leaves no paper trail, must now register as a "money service business" and submit to the new reporting standards. If an institution refuses to comply, Treasury can simply order U.S. banks to cease all business with it. "The threat of 'special measures' would modify the conduct of Saudi financial institutions in a heartbeat," says Lee Wolosky, former head of transnational threats at the National Security Council (NSC) under Bill Clinton and George W. Bush.

The Bush administration, however, has not wielded that threat seriously. A Canadian intelligence report from late last year stated that Saudi-based charities were funneling $1 to $2 million per month to Al Qaeda's estimated $30 million fortune. The Michigan-based Islamic Assembly of North America (IANA), for instance, which is funded by the Saudi government and private Saudi donors, has affiliates that continue to pipe money to jihadist groups through U.S. banks. Five members of one IANA spin-off, Help the Needy, were indicted at the end of February for raising $4 million for "unnamed individuals" in Baghdad. According to the FBI's indictment, most of the $4 million was laundered from New York central banks through the Jordan Islamic Bank in Amman. Despite this evidence, Treasury has yet to ban the Jordan Islamic Bank from U.S. markets. "The administration's refusal to use Section three-eleven is shocking and inexplicable," says William Wechsler, who led the effort to target Al Qaeda's funds as head of transnational threats at the NSC under Clinton.

In fact, the administration seems to be doing whatever it can to ensure that financial institutions suspected of funding terrorism are *not* stopped. In fiscal year 2003, Bush earmarked a paltry $4 million for Treasury to train foreign governments in combating terrorist financing—one-tenth the $40 million recommendation of a recent bipartisan terrorist-financing task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations. Equally bad is that when the American Bankers Association (ABA), which powerfully opposes the reach of these measures, groused last November that the government had deluged them with account information requests related to suspected terrorist funding—the Patriot Act permits such requests without subpoenas—Treasury capitulated and instituted a four-month moratorium on the requests. Given that the hijackers' fiscal habits raised red flags ("Suspicious Activity

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You deserve a factual look at...

Arabian Fables (II)

More fanciful Arab myths to sway world opinion.

Earlier this year, we published our message, "Arabian Fables (I)", in which we made clear how the Arab propaganda machine creates myths and lies with which to misinform the world. We discussed the myths of the "Palestinians" and of the "West Bank" and the mythical concept of "occupied territories". In today's message, we shall address three more of these myths.

What are some of these myths?

Jerusalem ("Arab East Jerusalem"). The Arabs have assiduously propagated the myths that Jerusalem is an Arab capital, that (after Mecca and Medina) Jerusalem is their third holy city, and that it is intolerable to them that infidels (Jews) are in possession of it.

The reality of course is that Jerusalem was never an Arab capital and that it was, until the Jews revitalized it, a dusty provincial city that hardly played any economic, social, or political role. Jerusalem is mentioned hundreds of times in the Jewish Bible and has been the center of the Jewish faith and the focus of Jewish longing ever since the Romans destroyed the Temple in the early years of the first millenium. Not once is Jerusalem mentioned in the Koran.

As to "East Jerusalem": There is East Saint Louis, there is East Hampton, and there used to be East Berlin, but, until the Arab propaganda machine created the concept, there was never in history an "East Jerusalem", let alone an "Arab East Jerusalem".

The eastern part of Jerusalem is now predominantly inhabited by Arabs, though their proportion is decreasing. But what is the reason for this? It is because the Jordanians destroyed all traces of Jewish presence from the eastern part of the city and drove all the Jews out during the 19 years (between 1948 and 1967) in which they were in occupation of the eastern part of the city. The world, informed by Arab propaganda, considers those Jews who wish to return to the eastern part of the city to be troublemakers or worse.

The concept of Jerusalem being a holy Arab city and the capital of whatever political entity the "Palestinians" may eventually form is a myth and so of course is the concept of "Arab East Jerusalem".

"Settlements". When Jordan came into possession of Judea/Samaria and the eastern part of Jerusalem, following the invasion of the newly-formed Jewish state, and stayed in occupation for 19 years, it systematically obliterated all Jewish villages in the area under their occupation, drove out the Jewish inhabitants, and left the area "judenrein" (free of Jews) – the first time that concept had been applied since the Nazis created it during their short and bloody reign in Germany. When the Israelis recovered these territories, they rebuilt these villages, created new ones, and built new towns and suburbs to existing cities, especially Jerusalem.

The Arabs decided to call these towns and villages "settlements", with their connotation of illegitimacy and impermanence. The world, including the United States, is much agitated over these population centers and, goaded by the Arabs, declares them to be impediments to peace. What nonsense! Nobody considers the tens of thousands of Arabs who continue to stream to these territories as impediments to peace.

> "The Arab propaganda machine has created myths that have been accepted by much of the world. No peace in the Middle East is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are!"

The term "settlements", too, is a propaganda myth created by the Arabs.

"Refugees". In 1948, when six Arab armies invaded the Jewish state in order to destroy it on the very day of its birth, broadcasts by the advancing Arab armies appealed to the resident Arabs to leave their homes so as not to be in the way of the invaders. As soon as the "quick victory" was won, they could return to their homes and would also enjoy the loot from the Jews, who would have been driven into the sea. It didn't turn out quite that way. Those Arabs who, despite the urgings of the Jews to stay and to remain calm, foolishly left, became refugees. Those who decided not to yield to those blandishments are now, and have been for over 50 years, citizens of Israel, with all the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows.

But what happened to those refugees – by best estimates about 600,000 of them? Did their "Arab brethren" allow them to settle in their countries, to work, and to become productive citizens and useful members of their societies? No! They kept and still keep them, their children, their grandchildren, and in some cases even their great-grandchildren, in miserable "refugee camps", so that they can be used as political and military pawns in order to keep the burning hatred against Israel alive and in order to supply the manpower for the unremitting fight against Israel.

During those more than fifty years, Israel has taken in more than three million Jewish immigrants from all parts of the world and has integrated them productively into its society. According to the "Palestinians", the Arab "refugees" have now marvelously increased to five million(!). It is the intent and fervent desire of the Arabs that all of them should return to Israel so as to destroy the country without the necessity of war

The "refugees" are a red herring and another myth created by the Arab propaganda machine.

The Arab propaganda machine, aided by the most high-powered public relations firms in the United States and all over, has created myths that, by dint of constant repetition, have been accepted as truth by much of the world. No sensible discussion, no peace in the Middle East, is possible until those Arab myths have been exposed for what they are.

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Reports," in banking parlance) in the months before September 11, 2001, but did not reach the authorities until after the attacks, such a moratorium represented a dangerous opening for terrorist-funders while relatively minor procedural changes were being made by Treasury. Worst of all, in September 2002, Treasury convened a task force to study Section 311's efficacy, but the task force does not intend to make recommendations until June. Thus, it will likely be at least two more months until the White House even thinks about using its most potent counterterrorist financing measures in the Middle East.

Indeed, the one moment when Section 311 might have made its mark was shockingly brief. On November 26, 2002, *The Washington Post* reported that the NSC had recommended that Bush send an ultimatum to the Saudi royals: Crack down on terrorist financiers or face a stern U.S. response. By that afternoon's White House press briefing, Ari Fleischer made it clear the administration had no such plans. "What was the name of the individual who said something about an ultimatum?" Fleischer glowered in response to a reporter's question about the NSC plan. "The president thinks that Saudi Arabia has been a good partner in the war on terrorism."

To be sure, the administration has made some stabs at controlling terrorist cash. Since September 11, 2001, Bush has frozen the assets of some 260 individuals and organizations around the world; won the adoption of U.N. Security Council resolutions demanding that member nations help dismantle sham transfer networks such as Somalia-based Al Barakaat; and assigned trans-agency terrorist-financing task forces to resolve intramural bickering. Acting in concert, U.S. law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and Treasury blocked over $110 million in the year following the terrorist attacks. But, since January 2002, the U.S. government has blocked just $15 million in terrorist assets. "Success should be measured by disrupting key nodes of our network, and a lot of that work remains," says Wechsler. "We've gone after the low-hanging fruit, and three-eleven could now help us get to those top branches."

WHY HAS THE administration failed to brandish 311 more than twice in 18 months? One reason is predictable enough: Bush's anti-regulatory bent. While the White House saw the political benefit of ratifying the Patriot Act in the wake of September 11, 2001, it has been less enthusiastic about asking U.S. banks to enact intrusive "know thy customer" protocol. Banks howled when the Clinton administration tried to pass similar anti-laundering legislation in 2000, and Republican Senator Phil Gramm from Texas, then-chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, killed the bill at their behest. Though the ABA muted its criticism of the Patriot Act when it passed after the September 11 attacks, Charles A. Intriago, publisher of *Money Laundering Alert*, told TNR that, within a few months, "most banks and security dealers fought ardently, which caused the Treasury to delay the implementation [of the special measures authorized by three-eleven]." Indeed, Big Finance helped wage a protracted fight to carve an exemption into Section 312, which can target offshore accounts of prime money-laundering concern. The exemption would have freed financial institutions from exercising "due diligence" for any offshore bank not located in a suspect jurisdiction—a gaping loophole that the Patriot Act sought to close. As Senators Charles Grassley, John Kerry, and Carl Levin, the co-architects of the Patriot Act's anti-laundering laws, pointed out in an October letter to Treasury, "This exemption has no statutory basis, no foundation in the legislative history, contradicts clear legislative intent, and should be removed."

Another hurdle to 311 is the administration's squeamishness about playing rough with Saudi Arabia and other ostensibly friendly oil states. But wielding—or even threatening to wield—311 against one of the nine major banks in the kingdom or demanding more transparency from a few Saudi charities would not imperil the traditionally symbiotic U.S.-Saudi rapport. Rather, it would provide the obstinate banks—who each do a staggering amount of business in U.S. markets annually—with the basic economic incentive to reform.

In the wake of the September 2001 terrorist attacks, Bush vowed to use "every resource at our command to win the war against terrorists, every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence." Now it seems he would rather save our strongest financial influence for a rainy day. Will there need to be yet another attack on U.S. citadels before the clouds gather over Riyadh? ■

Rumsfeld's bad options.

Strategic Attack

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

LAST WEEK, Donald Rumsfeld's war plan hit two snags. The most serious was the unexpected level of Iraqi resistance, which, when combined with the absence of a popular uprising in the south, required diverting some American and British forces from the road to Baghdad. This, in turn, created a problem for the defense secretary closer to home, as a parade of U.S. Army officers and their retired colleagues fanned out across the airwaves to criticize the defense secretary's battle plan.

The gist of their critique is fairly straightforward: Rumsfeld failed to approve the number of troops that theater commander Army General Tommy Franks requested for the war. It's not a new critique. The generals have been complaining about paltry troop levels in the war plan for months. But their complaints became more ferocious last week as casualty reports set the top brass maneuvering inside the Beltway to ensure that political leaders, not military commanders, took the blame. The issue was no longer simply whether Rumsfeld had

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dispatched sufficient forces to the Persian Gulf. It was his motives for doing so.

Retired Army General Barry McCaffrey, who has become Rumsfeld's most outspoken critic, asked, "Why would you do this operation with inadequate power?" To McCaffrey, the answer is obvious: "Because you have such a strong ideological view, and you're so confident in your views that you disregard the vehement military advice from, particularly, Army generals who you don't think are very bright." Elaborating on McCaffrey's point, retired Army Colonel Ralph Peters wrote in *The Washington Post* that, for the defense secretary, "[t]his war was supposed to prove the diminishing relevance of ground forces." Or, as *The New Yorker*'s Seymour Hersh summarized the objections of one war planner, "Rumsfeld had two goals: to demonstrate the efficacy of precision bombing and to 'do the war on the cheap.'"

There is a kernel of truth here. But few of these critics bothered to entertain a simpler and legitimate rationale for the war plan—namely, that it was drawn up with an eye toward political as well as military goals. Principal among these goals was the need to fight the war as a "war of liberation," which meant placing an extreme emphasis on minimizing Iraqi civilian casualties. Rumsfeld's plan also had to contend with the danger of large-scale American casualties and thus precluded a months-long massing of American forces in Kuwait, where they would have been vulnerable to Iraqi attack. Finally, to limit Saddam Hussein's ability to launch missiles, torch oil wells, and create mischief in southern Iraq, it called for a rapid advance to Baghdad and, hence, a smaller force. The alternatives being proposed by the generals today may arguably have enhanced the military effectiveness of the campaign. But they also might have led to political catastrophe.

PICTURES DO NOT lie, and the pictures coming from the battlefield in southern Iraq suggest that elements of the U.S. war plan were based on erroneous assumptions. Not least of these was that Iraqis would stream out onto the streets to greet GIs with bread and salt. Instead, American and British forces have been diverted to pacify cities the Pentagon had assumed would pacify themselves. Had Rumsfeld acceded to the original request by General Franks for 500,000 troops, a 14-day air campaign prior to the commencement of ground operations, and almost two months to reach the outskirts of Baghdad, there surely would have been sufficient forces to spare for this purpose. The defense secretary, however, initially favored an invasion force of 150,000, a simultaneous air and ground campaign, and a race to the Iraqi capital. In the end, he split the difference with Franks. The result was a plan that called for two heavy Army divisions, one light Army division, a Marine division, and a British division—nearly 300,000 troops in all. The time that elapsed between the commencement of the air and ground campaigns would now be measured in hours, not days. More important, the war would begin with a "rolling start," launched even before the entire U.S. force was in place.

Many of the setbacks in Iraq have derived less from this plan than from its execution. The fate of the missing 4th Infantry Division is by now well-known, its equipment stranded off of the coast of Turkey for weeks awaiting a green light that never came. Less well-known is that, were it not for Franks's insistence that the ships carrying the equipment remain off the coast of Turkey—an insistence that continued even after the Turkish parliament had voted against allowing American troops to transit through Turkey and in the face of admonitions from the White House and even the State Department to move their equipment to Kuwait—he might have another heavy division at his disposal by now. As for the thousands of "additional" troops being dispatched to the theater, their deployment was planned long before the war began. True, in the run-up to the war, Rumsfeld did, as Hersh points out, fiddle with their order of deployment—spelled out in the Time Phased Force Deployment Data, or "TipFid," a document that details which forces should be sent where and when. But this is hardly without precedent. During the run-up to the 1991 Gulf war, the Pentagon threw out the entire TipFid and began from scratch.

All these facts have been obscured by the chorus of Army officers that has emerged to accuse Rumsfeld of harboring a reflexive opposition to the use of ground forces. But, if true, the defense secretary isn't the only one wedded to a particular orthodoxy. McCaffrey—who told *The Washington Post* three days before the war that more than enough American troops were already in the Persian Gulf and then told NBC on the eve of war that "in the south, they're not going to put up much resistance"—had taken the lead in lobbying against Rumsfeld's attempt to kill the Army's cherished Crusader artillery system and now rails against the "twits" who tout high-tech weapons and air power in Iraq. Rumsfeld first earned the ire of McCaffrey and his fellow Army generals when he directed a "top-to-bottom" review of the armed forces in 2001, which, among other things, flirted with the idea of cutting two Army divisions and culminated in his decision to kill the Crusader. The two-time defense secretary has also prodded the Army to embrace his goal of "transforming" it from a lumbering dinosaur into an agile, light force that exploits the latest weapons and information technologies. The result has been a widespread sense within the Army's ranks that Rumsfeld considers the service an unwanted stepchild—a sentiment encapsulated by a cover story in *Armed Forces Journal International* last year, which ran a photograph of Rumsfeld along with the question, "Does he really hate the Army?" Convinced that the answer is yes, Army officers have charged that in Iraq Rumsfeld is, as Peters puts it, "out to prove a point. In his vision of the future—one shaped by technocrats and the defense industry—ground forces can be cut drastically in order to free funding for advanced technologies."

But was the point of the war plan really to transform Iraq into a weapons-testing range? "The notion that Rumsfeld designed Operation Iraqi Freedom with the idea of scoring points in a procurement debate is absurd," says retired Army

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Colonel and Boston University Professor Andrew Bacevich, himself a Rumsfeld critic. If the defense secretary was "out to prove a point," it was the Bush administration's insistence that this would be a war of liberation. That insistence obliged the Bush team to offer assurances that, as Rumsfeld put it, "we do not need to kill thousands of innocent civilians to remove Saddam Hussein from power." It also led them to implement unusually strict rules of engagement, to rule out bombing targets with a high probability of "collateral damage," and to overrule plans that would have turned the lights or water off in Baghdad. The same sensitivities played a role in the decision by Rumsfeld and his advisers to forgo a massive preinvasion bombardment. "You see the dead civilians on Al Jazeera?" asks a senior administration official. "Well, imagine the images you would be seeing if we used air power and heavy armor the way we did in the Gulf war."

Indeed, consider what might have transpired had the Army leadership gotten its way: numerous heavy divisions, a heavy bombing campaign prior to the commencement of ground operations, and a months-long buildup in Kuwait. "If the goal is to prevent the destruction of infrastructure and the destruction of Iraqi civilians," says Michael Vickers, an ex–Special Forces officer and military analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, "then the original CENTCOM plan would have been way too slow and methodical for that purpose." Why? To begin with, as Vickers explains, "The more bombing there is, the more civilian casualties there are, and a Gulf war–type air campaign on a cluttered battlefield doesn't make sense if the point is not to be at war with the Iraqi population but with the regime that oppresses them." The logic extends to the ground campaign as well, which, if it took two months to reach Baghdad, and did so with twice as much firepower, would have obvious implications for Iraq's civilian population—particularly if a slower advance were preceded by artillery barrages and air strikes.

Those implications, moreover, would resonate far beyond Iraq, for even in conflicts viewed as broadly legitimate—which this one, unlike, say, Kosovo, is not—questions of who may be killed and how many may be killed in the pursuit of a particular aim have become increasingly controversial. This is doubly true in this case, where killing civilians contradicts the avowed purpose of the war and would have an immediate effect throughout the region. Indeed, even the relatively low level of civilian casualties the U.S. campaign has inflicted thus far has elicited an outcry across the Arab world—an outcry that would be louder still if the numbers approached the thousands of civilians killed in the first Gulf war.

Another motive guiding the Rumsfeld war plan was force protection. This is particularly true of the rolling start, the central purpose of which was to avert a bottleneck of American troops in Kuwait and, hence, to deny Saddam a tempting target. "Sequencing all these forces through a tiny country like Kuwait would have been a logistical nightmare," says Thomas Keaney, a retired Air Force colonel and executive director of the Johns Hopkins University Foreign Policy Institute. "Piling up such a small force in such a small area would have also invited retaliation from the other side." The point of funneling forces through Kuwait, rather than stacking them up there, was simply this: to deny Iraqi forces the opportunity to employ chemical or other weapons against a stationary target—namely, hundreds of thousands of American troops concentrated in a relatively small area. "From the beginning, we understood that leaving [American forces] in the desert for six months was not an option," says a senior defense official. "It would have been tantamount to painting a bull's-eye on their backs."

In addition to keeping American and Iraqi casualties to a minimum, the Rumsfeld plan—and particularly its call for a small force—reflected the desire for a rapid advance through southern Iraq. This, in turn, reflected concerns that Saddam would torch now-secure oil fields, destroy dams and dikes, and launch missile attacks from the area. "Speed equals a small force," says Tom Donnelly, a defense expert at the American Enterprise Institute, "and, because we used a small force, the nightmare scenarios in the south have now been taken off the table." But the swiftness of the advance left behind another nightmare—the rear-area mayhem that has exacted a steep toll on American and British forces. Anticipated or not, Rumsfeld's advisers claim the price was one worth paying. "You have to consider the alternative scenarios," says one. "We did, and whatever you see now doesn't even come close to them."

THE PRIMACY THAT the Rumsfeld war plan attaches to political considerations has inevitably left the defense secretary open to accusations of "micromanaging the war's operational details," as Hersh describes the military's complaint. It is true that, in the debate over force structure in Iraq, Rumsfeld and his advisers unquestionably reached deeper into the realm of military expertise than any of their recent predecessors. But the political ends of this war are more complex than simple battlefield victory and arguably too important to be left to the generals. Their plan for a lengthy air assault followed by a grinding armor advance would almost certainly have resulted in far more Iraqi casualties—and possibly more American ones as well. True, success on the battlefield would have been assured. But does anyone today really believe it is not?

At its core, then, the debate between Rumsfeld and the Army generals isn't about how much is enough. Nor is it even about the merits of limited war versus the use of overwhelming force. It is about the role of politics in wartime. The first Bush administration prided itself on leaving strategic questions to the generals, even allowing them to set the terms of the Gulf war's conclusion, the consequences of which we are still living with today. And, whether it was Bosnia, the military budget, or homosexuals serving in the armed services, the Clinton administration allowed themselves to be overruled by the generals on a regular basis. It was during the tenure of then–Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, notes former chief Air Force historian and University of North Carolina Professor Richard

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Kohn, "that civilian control eroded most since the rise of the military establishment in the 1940s and 1950s." Under Rumsfeld, the pendulum has clearly swung back in the other direction.

The defense secretary's uniformed critics, echoing Powell's boast that, during his tenure at the Pentagon, "we were able to constantly bring the political decisions back to what we could do militarily," insist the pendulum swing back their way once more. But Powell had things backward, and so do his heirs. It is political ends that dictate military means. Were the reverse to be true and were this war to be handed over to the generals, the result would likely be an impressive military victory and a political disaster. And that wouldn't be much of a victory at all. ■

Pat Moynihan's legacy.

Master Builder

BY NATHAN GLAZER

ABOUT A MONTH ago, I received from Pat Moynihan a very well-produced little book titled *Vision+Voice*, subtitled *Design Excellence in Federal Architecture: Building a Legacy*. No author or editor is named, but the inside cover lists "Daniel P. Moynihan" at the head of a galaxy of architects, urban designers, and museum directors: David M. Childs, Henry N. Cobb, Hugh Hardy, Joan Goody, Richard Meier, Robert A.M. Stern, Moshe Safdie, Susan Henshaw Jones, Charles Gwathmey, and on and on. What, I wondered, was all this about? It turned out this was a tribute to Moynihan, who in 1962, we are told, wrote the "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture"—"a one-page document buried inside a report on Federal office space." Is this historic document, which is reprinted in the book, and to which the following contributors pay tribute, government policy? Not exactly. Was it an executive order signed by a president, or a regulation adopted by an agency, or a resolution or law of Congress? None of the above. It is a historic document that, despite its nonofficial character as an addendum to a report on federal office-space needs by the then-assistant to Secretary of Labor Arthur Goldberg, has played a great role in guiding federal building projects and is remembered, recalled, almost revered, by architects and urban designers.

Along with the little volume came what turned out to be the last piece Pat published, an op-ed in *The Washington Post* from February 3, 2003. It is taken from Pat's address to the conference marking the fortieth anniversary of the "Guiding Principles." In the op-ed, Pat writes, "The 'Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture' were proclaimed by President Kennedy on May 23, 1962. They called for a design 'which is distinguished and which will reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American National Government.'" Those strong, optimistic words have been often quoted, but there is an intriguing—let us say, Moynihanian—ambiguity there. The words of course were not President Kennedy's but Moynihan's, but he doesn't say so directly—let President Kennedy take the credit, and let the words thereby have more weight because they are the president's. Nor did President Kennedy "proclaim" anything, at least from other accounts. He saw the report and wrote something like "OK" on it.

How then did the "Guiding Principles" have the effect they did, how did they, as *Vision+Voice* tells us, "capture the imagination of important decision-makers and ultimately become the rationale for a new approach to the design of government buildings and public space"? How come "they are often referenced by architects, design professionals, and public officials"?

I AM LED to these reflections not only because I shared with Pat Moynihan a great interest in architecture and urban design but because, in the wake of his remarkable career, we are going to hear—as we have heard before—a good number of people tell us that, despite the range of his ideas and his knowledge, his mastery of language and his unique style, the phrases he coined that have become part of the language ("defining deviance down," for example), "he won't leave anything behind." But the story of the "Guiding Principles" is a wonderful example of the varied ways in which one can make a difference, even without landmark legislation.

For some unaccountable reason and even though he did guide some very important legislation through the Senate and the House (take 1991's ISTEA—the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act—for example, which reined in the highway builders, who were prepared to pave over the nation, by shifting funds to mass transit), Moynihan is held deficient in major legislative achievement. "For all the high praise lavished on Moynihan when he announced that he would leave the Senate," his most recent biographer, Godfrey Hodgson, writes, "the Washington insiders' view of his performance there was less than flattering. It was conceded that he was an ornament, 'the kind of person,' one friend-turned-opponent says, 'the Founding Fathers would have wanted in the Senate:

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urbane, witty, scholarly, wise, eloquent. But what will he leave behind?' " Apparently, being urbane, witty, scholarly, wise, and eloquent isn't enough. In particular, ex-staff members of Moynihan's who are now Republicans (there are a few) I think take this position. Perhaps Moynihan's achievements in remodeling Social Security and welfare reform don't count much with them. But, aside from the direct legislative route, which is so difficult to take to a successful and clear conclusion in our system of government, there are other ways of wielding power and influence and shaping the world. The story of the "Guiding Principles" illustrates some of them.

Ideas imaginatively expressed matter; persistence in advancing them matters; ingenuity in spreading them, among elites and bureaucrats, in the newspapers, in journal articles, matters. Being in a position of power of course also matters. Moynihan advanced his ideas from many positions of power (such as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee), but he also turned some formally rather minor positions (such as assistant to the secretary of labor) and some rather ambiguous ones (such as domestic adviser to President Nixon) into positions of power.

It strikes me that this theme of "but what will he leave behind?" is a way of showing one has a sophisticated appreciation of wheeling and dealing, the "wasn't Lyndon Johnson [or Tip O'Neill] great?" syndrome. In some ways they were, and Pat Moynihan was the last to sneer at these ways of wielding power. He shared with some of his friends, such as the political scientists Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson, an appreciation of the political machine and its operators. At least it did something, and, on the whole, he thought what it did was in the interests of the workingman and the poor.

If his language was complex, his ideas about government emphasized simplicity and transparency.

Moynihan was a man of ideas, but he had an empirically based suspicion of those who were fond of schemes too subtle and too complex, too theory-based. There were some very complex and heady proposals made in the 1960s, such as a chain of community-based psychiatric centers with a range of services demanding many tens of thousands of skilled professionals. How big is the Oxford faculty, he once asked me. Why? This scheme to remake psychiatric treatment requires 20 Oxfords in personnel, he said, and where will we get them? As Lyndon Johnson's poverty program was being formulated, with all its various means to empower the poor, Moynihan would say we could do more to overcome poverty by restoring twice-a-day mail delivery than with a host of new community organizations. As with so much Moynihan said, this might bewilder an uninstructed listener, but sometimes he would spell it out for the slow: It would create another 50,000 good government jobs.

His language was complex—both because his mind was complex but also because, as someone in politics who had to think of many constituencies, from his academic and intellectual friends to the upstate and West Side voters, he was not averse to having things he said understood two or three ways, or no way at all, sometimes leaving people bewildered.

But, if his language was complex, his ideas of government and how it should operate emphasized simplicity and transparency. His famed 1965 paper on the Negro family, it was assumed by those who never read it, called for more services to keep families together, more ingenious social work, more patronization of the poor. Not at all: While most of it was analytical, what it called for if anything was more jobs—after all, Moynihan wrote it while he was assistant secretary of labor, and they were in the job business, not the social services business. Behind all that complexity of language and thought was the requirement that government be simple and clear. That was one reason he opposed the Hillary Rodham Clinton health plan: The legislation putting it into effect was too long and too complicated, too many things might go wrong. He would say, look at the original legislation instituting Social Security—a few pages. And then look at all the ways we are trying to reform it—hundreds of pages of legislation whose varied implications no one can fully absorb.

Admittedly, one reason he was against the Clinton health plan was that it would have reduced the flow of federal funds to the teaching hospitals that were so important for New York City (and Boston). That was another kind of simplicity: Defend your constituents. But he could make sophisticated arguments for why the teaching hospitals were important for everybody. Would he have done the same had he been representing Wyoming? Well, he was not. And so ISTEA made less money available for high-speed roads, more for urban transportation. After all, one-third of the people in the country who take public transportation to get to their jobs are in New York City, and they were Pat's constituents.

Moynihan's greatest efforts were in reforming welfare, our program for poor mothers and their children, and once again one sees a penchant for the simple or the apparently simple. The poor need money, more than services, and so he proposed

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the Family Assistance Plan, a guaranteed minimum income for every family. His longest and most substantial book was *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income* (1973), which explained why his plan failed politically. But then later research—Moynihan was a great believer in research and helped launch some of the major research enterprises of the last few decades—revealed that, even if it had passed, his plan to provide a minimum household income would not have had the effect in slowing family breakup that theory (or some theory) projected. In 1978, he conducted hearings on these important and counter-intuitive research findings to help set the stage for the next wave of reform, which put more emphasis on direct incentives and services to help the poor get and hold jobs, which is rather more complicated than handing out money. Recall that Moynihan began thinking about this problem at a time when most young mothers were not in the labor force, and a changing society required different policies. But he took a strong stand when the work requirements became mandatory with punitive effects. To him, the children came first, and how could you just cut them off?

THREE OF MOYNIHAN'S books in the 1990s were sustained arguments on a single set of foreign policy themes and speak to us today with particular force. There was *On the Law of Nations* (1990), *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics* (1993), and *Secrecy* (1998). The first argued for the promise and possibilities of international law while fully aware of its limits when there was no power to enforce it, and, in a world of sovereign states, there would always be such limits. Moynihan was cognizant that international law represented an emergent international moral standard that could be enhanced and extended and that influence and power are not wielded only by the ultimate use of force. He was responding to some of the actions of the Reagan administration, which had transgressed some long-maintained standards in international law. (In the 1980s, international law was transgressed in secret; today, it is mocked in public by the defenders of the present administration. Some will see this as a desirable advance in realism and honesty. I don't think Moynihan would have.)

In *Pandaemonium*, Moynihan explored the role of ethnic antagonisms in international relations and the breakup of states. Many were indifferent to this subject when Moynihan first went to Washington. He told me that no one at a senior level could be found to attend a U.N. conference on ethnicity in Ljubljana in the '60s, and it required going down to his level in the Department of Labor to find someone willing to represent the United States. He sent from Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, once part of the multiethnic Austro-Hungarian empire, the memorable message, "I have seen the past, and it worked." He was referring most directly to the architecture but perhaps also, in his Moynihanian way, to other things.

In both *On the Law of Nations* and *Pandaemonium*, the spirit of Woodrow Wilson hovers over the argument. Wilson is not much admired today, but Moynihan took a leading role in creating the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., and that is where he placed his office when he left the Senate. He thought we could still learn from Wilson despite his failures. He understood better than anyone that ethnic identification had let loose enormous problems for the maintenance of multiethnic states. We had benefited from the ethnic tensions that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union. But we were also endangered by the multiplicity of states, some in a condition of serious disorder, that emerged from it. Moynihan was more farsighted than anyone else in seeing that ethnic tensions were weakening the Soviet Union, and he was brilliant in exposing with ordinary common sense the tendency of the CIA and other intelligence agencies to overestimate the power, wealth, and stability of the Soviet Union.

He deplored the spread of security precautions in Washington and the ham-handed and ugly way in which we defend our public buildings. For 40 years, he had bulldoggedly maintained and guided—from various positions low and high, and by way of many and varied bureaucratic manifestations through seven presidencies—the rebuilding of Pennsylvania Avenue. Not a full success—what in life is?—but certainly a remarkable achievement in a society and political culture in which it is hard to do anything on a grand scale except build roads and wage wars. In his dismay at the spread of the bollards and bulwarks and security precautions in buildings, his appreciation of an open society came together with his passion for a humanely built environment. "What has he left behind?" one asks. Well, there is Washington's Union Station, rebuilt and restored through his efforts, for one. And Pennsylvania Avenue. And, in New York, the restored Customs Building and, in time, a new Pennsylvania Station. And, in Buffalo, Louis Sullivan's saved Guaranty Building. One way of saving it was for Moynihan to put his west New York state office into it. Let us not underestimate this when there was possibly not one other member of Congress who knew who Louis Sullivan was and why the Guaranty Building, a model for how architects could manage the new form of the tall office building, was important.

Well, all that may be ornament (which I would not depreciate), but, beyond that, he gave us the model of a statesman and politician dealing with serious matters, respectful of research, considerate of what the university and academy have to contribute to our understanding, and willing to return again and again to intractable problems.

In that last op-ed in *The Washington Post*, Moynihan criticized the apparently boundless extension of our security precautions and sadly described patrons of the Martin Luther King Library, near his Washington apartment building, "putting their book bags through a scanner, being wanded and watched by armed 'library police.'" He would have had much to say about our current circumstances, and, as a former assistant put it, in doing so he would have been "witty, scholarly, wise, eloquent." There's not much of that in government today, and would we not be better off if there were? Certainly, some brightness has gone out of the lives of all of us who knew him. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Two Faces

THEY DECIDED TO KEEP THE French title on **CET AMOUR-LÀ,** which turns out to be a sound idea for two reasons. First, the subject is Marguerite Duras, more specifically the last years, the last love, of this thoroughly French novelist, essayist, film writer, and director. That last affair is so like a novel Duras might have written that a translated title might have jarred—just as *Hiroshima Mon Amour,* made from a Duras screenplay, fits rightly under its Gallic cap.

CET AMOUR-LÀ
(New Yorker)

FELLINI: I'M A BORN LIAR
(First Look)

This screenplay by Josée Dayan comes from an autobiographical novel by Yann Andrea, Duras's young lover in that last affair. He was a university student when he met her, enamored of her work, and asked if he might write to her. She gave him her address, and he then wrote to her every day for five years. In 1980 she permitted him to visit at her seaside apartment in Trouville. The film then settles into an emotional yet almost clinical study of a woman in her mid-sixties, famous, vastly experienced in love and its attendant divertissements, who is now making the most of latter-day youthful attention.

Yann is grateful, patient, understanding, or at least obedient. She is cruel, warm, mercurial, oracularly profound, pretentiously oracular, and is winebibbing throughout. She is writing still, busily, and Yann serves as her secretary. She pities him, despises him, loves him, is irritated by him. There is a sense in Duras of an experienced performer making the most of her (probable) last show. She storms into his bedroom one night when he is fast asleep, orders him to wake up and get out of the house, crams some of his things into a suitcase and throws it out the window. He retrieves the suitcase, eventually returns, and is welcomed. Time passes, her strength wanes, but not her tyranny or his fealty. At last, the true last, she sends him out of the room so that she can die.

And there is a second reason for retaining the French title. Duras is played by Jeanne Moreau, who for more than fifty years has been the epitome of Frenchness on the screen—from the New Wave, where she was regnant, through all the subsequent ripples. More is entailed here than longevity and opus numbers. The first glimpse of Moreau's face in this film, undisguisedly aged and with black-rimmed glasses, has a powerful effect. It is not just the cliché of time's toll, though this is true enough. That first glimpse is like seeing the quintessence of French film history in the last half-century. Her face is the signet of so many artists who have done their work through her—Truffaut, Godard, Malle, Demy, Blier, and other Frenchmen. (In 1972 she made a film, called *Nathalie Granger*, written and directed by Duras.) Certainly she has done memorable work with non-French directors—Welles and Antonioni and Buñuel among them. But that first glimpse of her face here was, for me, a poignant summary of a good portion of my French film experience.

I must note that Aymeric Demarigny plays Yann gently, and that Dayan, much experienced in television, directed with a fine pictorial eye. The first shot of Yann coming over a seawall onto the beach en route to Duras, his form against the blue sky, is an invitation to visual pleasure. But Moreau's face is the base and the beauty of the film.

Another face in another film holds a history. Oddly enough, this is not an actor's face but a director's.

Heaven has quite clearly divided humankind in two: those poor wretches who don't respond to Federico Fellini's work and the rest of blessed us for whom Fellini's best films are part of our memory, our dreams, our wisdom in some measure, and our secret sublimation. The person for whom *I Vitelloni* and *8½* and *Amarcord* are not private property has, I and many others would say, suffered the wrong incarnation. He or she would do better to go back and start all over again.

All this is brought to bear by a new documentary called **FELLINI: I'M A BORN LIAR.** In 1992 a Canadian film-maker named Damian Pettigrew was lucky enough to find Fellini with free time (rare) and in an expansive mood (not rare), and filmed ten hours of conversation with the then seventy-two-year-old director, who died the next year. Subsequently Pettigrew greatly condensed the interview, then spliced in film clips, bits of conversation with Giulietta Masina, Fellini's wife, and some friends and colleagues, along with relevant landscapes. This is not by any means the first documentary about Fellini: he even made a quasi-documentary about himself, the delightful-sad *Fellini Intervista*, and he has appeared as himself in some of his films—*The Clowns* and *Fellini's Roma*. They are all welcome.

A point that is partly true of the past interviews is even more true of this one: the viewer who hasn't seen the films is liable to be more teased than informed. Most of the clips are short and unexplained. But for other viewers Pettigrew's film will be worthwhile for essentially the same reason as the past ones. The more one looks at and listens to Fellini the man, the more one realizes that most of the films are exponents of the man. They are more or less autobiographical, but whether more or less, they convey the ebullience, the wit, the latent seriousness, and, most endearingly, the sheer theatricality of the maker himself. I am not forgetting the unbelievable treasure of Marcello Mastroianni's face when I say that Fellini's face seems almost the source of his films. He actually did a little acting in Rossellini's *Il Miracolo*, but as we watch him here, we feel that he made his films with other people just because he couldn't play all the parts himself.

What he has to say here about art and the art of film will not be new to many. He considers himself a medium. Fellini doesn't make the films—someone takes over when he arrives on the set. He tries to tell the truth, but a film is a succession of his inventions that add up to the truth. He tries

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to keep sensitized to the moment and the state of what he has already done on a film when he begins a day's work. I spent one day with him on the set of *Juliet of the Spirits* in 1964 and saw him, at eight in the morning, with people bustling all around him, hulked hugely over a typewriter on an orange crate rewriting the scene that they were about to shoot.

In this documentary some of his actors (Terence Stamp) remember him with affection. Others (Donald Sutherland) felt bullied by him. One rare and unexpected treat is a short visit with Italo Calvino, whose writing meant much to Fellini. But it is Fellini's face that is peculiarly welcome, the face that—in a probably fantasizing but pertinent way—endorses his films. ■

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Why Plays Fail

WHAT MAKES A PLAY fail? The easiest answer is insufficient creative gifts, but none of the plays under review this week are by untalented people. Let's rephrase the question: what makes a play by a good writer fail?

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN, by a very good writer indeed, provides one kind of example. A play can fail not through lack of imagination but through excess of it. Salman Rushdie's historical epic about the evolution of modern India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh has been remodeled for the stage by the author, in collaboration with the literary consultant Simon Reade and the director Tim Supple. All three were clearly determined to treat the original material with the kind of awestruck reverence due a Booker Prize–winning novel. More's the pity. Rushdie could have benefited from a demon dramaturg brandishing a big black marker and a large pair of scissors. Cramming this 531-page novel into a three-and-a-half-hour play is tantamount to stuffing a sacred cow into a sausage casing. Rushdie's storytelling remains quite lively, and his language is always spunky and animated; but in the second part particularly, the play becomes such a wild, bumpy ride through the novel's leisurely landscape that a spectator would be well advised to bring along a good supply of car-sick bags and some Dramamine.

MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN
(Apollo Theater)

MY LIFE WITH ALBERTINE
(Playwrights Horizons)

DIRTY STORY
(Harold Clurman Theater)

In its current production by the Royal Shakespeare Company under the auspices of Columbia University, which includes twenty actors transforming into more than a hundred parts, *Midnight's Children* is as teeming as India itself. Rushdie's ambitious plan, as he describes it, is to combine three stories: the history of the postcolonial subcontinent, the saga of a Muslim family, and the life of Saleem Sinai. Saleem, the narrator and chief surrogate for the author, was born, along with a thousand other babies, at the stroke of midnight on the day of Indian independence. As one of "midnight's children," he is thereby endowed with special visionary powers that seem to reside in his nose. This large sweet-potato-shaped object gives him the capacity to hear voices, to invade minds, to identify with others of the same nature. Following a number of painful adventures, including wars, marches, murders, and massacres, not to mention the draining of his nose and the surgical removal of his testicles, Saleem learns that it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be "indissolubly handcuffed to history"—doomed to be both witnesses and participants, masters and victims of their times.

The audience is also handcuffed to history, as filtered through Rushdie's fevered imagination. Indeed, the historical events, illustrated in Living Newspaper style through a series of grainy newsreels, emerge as the most coherent elements in the play: the 1919 strike called by Gandhi to mourn the presence of the British; the coming of independence in 1947, followed by the partition of the country into Muslim and Indian states; the Language Riots in Bombay in the 1950s; the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965; the secession of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971. But running alongside this historical narrative is the fantastical story of Saleem and his family, beginning with the courtship in 1917 of his grandmother and grandfather (a Muslim doctor obliged by Islamic law to examine various defective parts of his future wife's anatomy through a hole in a sheet). Rushdie superimposes fiction on fact in a manner used by Tolstoy in *War and Peace* (and later by Pasternak in *Doctor Zhivago*) in order to measure the impact of individual destiny on larger historical events. He even borrows a trick from Gilbert and Sullivan, when in a plot twist a nurse reveals that she had switched two babies in their cradles. This last device makes Rushdie's account a bit schematic, since Saleem and Shiva, the switched infants, are forced to represent the artificial division between the entire Muslim and Hindu nations. But Rushdie certainly knows how to keep his plot alive with suspense, reversal, intrigue, and coincidence, as well as vibrating with lusty, witty, and robust language.

If the play stuck to Saleem's story, *Midnight's Children* might provide a more emotionally charged evening. But the author also feels compelled to tell the stories of Saleem's grandparents, parents, uncle, three aunts, and various spouses and offspring. There are dozens of detours into the sexual dysfunction of Saleem's various male relatives, the evolution of Bollywood movies and the erotic intrigues of directors and stars, the murder of Saleem's aunt by a jealous husband, a spitting competition involving a magical spittoon, the bullying of Saleem by his loutish schoolmates, the astronomic rise of Saleem's sister into pop stardom, a tracking expedition with Saleem as the bloodhound sniffing out Indian soldiers, an encounter with a witch and satanic houris in an Expressionist hell, and so forth. Any of these plot lines would have sufficed. But the patchwork of genres makes the play seem alternately realistic-historical, mythical-factual, magical-naturalistic, and fantastical-mundane—indeed, endowed with more hyphenated genres than even Polonius was able to imagine.

Perhaps the mixture of styles would be more palatable if the acting were stronger. But the director has not always been able to fuse his primarily Hindu and Muslim cast into a unified ensemble. Meneka Dasup has touching moments as Saleem's mother Amina, and Sameena Zehra is sturdy as his confidante Padma. But Zubin Varla, virtually carrying the play on his back as Saleem, rarely taps into the private life of his character, probably because he has been asked

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to play less to his fellow actors than to the audience, diluting intimate revelations with comic asides.

One keeps waiting for the play to ignite into metaphysical fireworks. But *Midnight's Children* is a display of mostly damp theatrical squibs, signified by overamplified explosions, laser beams, shadowgraphs, and tricky lighting effects (among them Richard Foreman's familiar habit of focusing blinding lights in the audience's eyes). The stage is simply too crowded, the acting too scattered, the adaptation too sprawling, to keep us focused on a clear and compelling dramatic line. For William Blake, the road of excess may lead to the palace of wisdom. For Salman Rushdie, it has led to the temple of glut.

Richard Nelson's **My Life With Albertine** is another adaptation of a fine novel, this one by Proust. It represents an effort to tailor *À la recherche du temps perdu*—or rather the two sections of it concerning Albertine—into the garments of an Off-Broadway musical. Sounds pretty loopy, I admit. But Nelson managed a similar thing quite well with *The Dead*, reinforcing Joyce's tale of faded love and regret with nostalgic Irish folk tunes.

In his current effort, however, something has gone horribly wrong. The chameleon-like Nelson, usually so good at adapting his style to that of other writers, is here displaying every color except the nuanced shades that Proust brought to his novel. A tale of sexual suspicion and paranoid jealousy, filtered through a sensibility as fine as gossamer, has been adapted into a banal and clumsy theatrical narrative with flat, vulgar dialogue. And this literary felony has been compounded by dreadful casting, clumsy directing, and a routine, superfluous musical score that manages to make a delicate masterpiece sound like a pastiche of Stephen Sondheim's *Into the Woods* and Sandy Wilson's *The Boyfriend*.

Nelson has split his narrator into two—one character a middle-aged chorus, sensitively played by Brent Carver in the style of a desiccated David Niven; the other, the younger Marcel, nervously performed by baby-faced Chad Kimball as if his underwear were chafing him. These two men relate to each other more affectionately than to anyone else. Indeed, the only credible love story is that between the younger and the older Marcel. As for the mysterious and elusive Albertine who inspires such painful jealousy in the hero, she has become, to quote Richard Nelson's Mandarin imagery, "a real little bitch with a poker up her ass." Anyway, as played by the red-headed Kelli O'Hara, the "sweet cheat" comes on like a suburban Connecticut schoolgirl flirting with an even blander Yale boyfriend.

For reasons that escape me, the play has been set in an old-fashioned music hall, as if Marcel's hopeless passion were something to be performed between vaudeville acts. Actually, it is performed between Ricky Ian Gordon's hackneyed songs, which the cast delivers with the kind of artificial energy that suggests they are auditioning for their next jobs. The music-hall stage is also used for some desultory choreography performed by three demoiselles in chiffon dresses cavorting like a bad memory of Isadora Duncan teaching Vassar girls to dance around a maypole. It goes without saying that Proust was a master of private moments, not music-hall routines. But so much in this production is a bizarre departure from Proust's intentions.

I am at a loss to explain this uncharacteristic failure of taste. But Nelson's most recent foray into the past, a play about Benedict Arnold called *The General From America*, was no great shakes either, partly because the playwright created a bombastic Colonial character in the same grandiloquent style that Kenneth Koch satirized in *George Washington Crossing the Delaware*. Come to think of it, Nelson had no right to judge Benedict Arnold's betrayal of America when he was preparing to do the same thing to Marcel Proust.

John Patrick Shanley's **Dirty Story** is another example of a misbegotten play misdirected by its author. *Dirty Story* is being produced under the auspices of the LAByrinth Theater Company, the same group that did such a stunning job with Stephen Adly Guirgis's *Our Lady of 121st Street*. But this production displays none of the playwriting power or acting talent that distinguished that work, even though Guirgis claims Shanley as a mentor. There are some talented LAByrinth actors in the cast of *Dirty Story*, but you would never know it from the broad, undifferentiated performances they are currently giving under Shanley's direction. If this shows a failure in directorial skill, it is also a writing problem—the characters have to serve both as real human beings and as broad political cartoons, a task that makes them virtually unplayable.

Described as "a savage and bloody comedy," *Dirty Story* is designed partly as an offbeat romance, partly as a parable of the conflict in the Middle East. It begins as a cute meet in a park between a young woman writer and an older man who has determined that fiction is dead. The brute Brutus puts down Wanda's literary efforts because he now believes that storytelling is only relevant in relation to History. He is also disturbed about the effect of literature on the biosphere ("it takes seventeen trees to make one ton of paper").

Shanley, who wrote *Moonstruck* for Cher, apparently now shares these ecological anxieties, because he abruptly shifts gears into political parable. Brutus claims that Wanda is a "German Jew," while he is a "Jew German," a distinction that escapes me and, I would guess, most of the audience as well. Yet it encourages Brutus, inspired by the silent film series *The Perils of Pauline*, to treat all of history as a story of the Villain, the Victim, and the Hero. He illustrates this by tying Wanda up, stuffing a rubber ball in her mouth, brandishing a chain saw near her appendages, and threatening her with rape. Saved at the last minute by the Hero (a cowboy named Frank), she picks up a gun and intones, "Call me Israel."

Still with me? It's not over. Not only has the "German Jew" become "Israel," but the "Jew German" has been transformed into Palestine, while Frank the cowboy has come to represent America and an English bartender named Watson has become his British ally. To confirm the analogies, Brutus has begun wearing an Arab headdress and an explosive belt, while Wanda is arguing over who actually owns the apartment they are sharing. Before long, the four characters are discussing Abraham and Isaac, Hiroshima, Hitler and the Nazis, and (finally) the difference between a German Jew ("a creature of racial theory . . . created by Adolf Hitler") and a Jew German (someone endowed with "faith"). Brutus and Wanda shoot each other, but they do not die. Instead, they end up playing a game of poker with Frank and Watson.

If any of this strikes you as coherent, or sheds any light on the Arab-Israeli conflict, then I invite you to apply for my job. Despite the praise it has received in some quarters, *Dirty Story* is simply another piece of Shanley whimsy gussied up with topical feathers. This playwright has been turning out relatively uncelebrated plays for so long that he may have gotten a little lightheaded. Anyhow, *Dirty Story* strikes me as the work of a punch-drunk boxer who, having been roughed up in too many bouts, is now throwing lefts and rights in every possible direction. And that is another reason why plays fail. When authors are not sufficiently rewarded for what they do well, they may end up producing acts of desperation disguised as political parables. ■

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David A. Bell

The Napoleon Complex

Dominique de Villepin's idea of glory.

What would Dominique de Villepin make of the following scenario? The most powerful country in the world, and the self-proclaimed standard-bearer of the West, makes an unprovoked, overwhelming attack on a large Muslim state and occupies it. The leader of the attack claims to be acting preventively, and therefore, ultimately, in self-defense. He also claims to be bringing Western values, and a new era, to the Middle East. But his path is not entirely smooth: in world opinion he is pilloried for atrocities against innocent Muslims.

What would de Villepin make of this? Well, it depends on which country we are talking about. The description may fit the America of George W. Bush, but it certainly fits the France of Napoleon Bonaparte, who invaded and occupied Egypt in the year 1798 (partly as a preventive move against the British Empire). And it is important to understand that for de Villepin, Napoleon is nothing less than a hero of almost Christ-like dimensions. The foreign minister of France found time in 2001 to publish a six-hundred-page book on Napoleon, titled *Les Cent-Jours, Ou l'esprit de sacrifice,* or *The Hundred Days, or the Spirit of Sacrifice*. (It is not yet available in translation.) It is a strange work: sometimes elegant and smart, sometimes pretentious and wrongheaded. More importantly, it offers a disturbing glimpse into the mind of the man who has done more than anyone else to rally opposition to the United States in the current crisis.

De Villepin may pose in the United Nations as the great defender of reason, prudence, and international law against an arrogant, foolhardy, and unreasonable America. But his book quickly dispels his pose. It suggests that, in fact, he is a man lacking firm political principles, romantically besotted with raw political power, and ready to overlook misdeeds committed in its name—but only when the power in question is French.

Like Napoleon himself, Dominique Galouzeau de Villepin—by training an elite civil servant and career diplomat—is a quite prolific author. Indeed, to judge by his literary output, it is hard to imagine how he has found the time to obstruct American policy. Scarcely fifteen months after publishing *The Hundred Days,* he hit the stands again with a book-length meditation on French history entitled *Le cri de la gargouille,* or *The Gargoyle's Cry.* He is now said to be working on a study of French poetry.

Dominique de Villepin by Darren Thompson for The New Republic

In a French context, though, the foreign minister's literary profile is not so surprising. French politics and literature have always been far more deeply interfused than their American counterparts. Napoleon wrote well in many genres, and even tried his hand at a sentimental novel. Great nineteenth-century writers such as Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and Tocqueville attained high political office. More recently, the French foreign service employed the poets Paul Claudel and Saint-John Perse, while the novelist André Malraux served as Charles de Gaulle's minister of culture. De Gaulle himself wrote memoirs of literary quality. Politicians regularly join the ranks of the Académie Française.

De Villepin may well reach the Académie himself in due course, but his cultural beatification will be owed to his political prominence, not to the quality of his prose. He writes with confidence and energy, but also with a weakness for bathos, bombast, and cliché: "Our history is written, like a palimpsest, on the body of a nation stitched with scars"; "He embarked, after declaring, like Caesar at the Rubicon, 'the die is cast'"; "Guided by favorable winds, the Eagle [Napoleon], in majestic flight, arrived at its destination"; "The modern hero took his side by the ancient one, alone in the face of a contrary destiny." Icarus-like, the author swoops up toward the sun of Romantic lyricism, only to plummet, wings melted, headlong into the ocean of banality. This style is not untypical of "literary" French politicians, who often seem to think that they can write as if the year were still 1830. The result, inevitably, is embarrassing pastiche, and the infection of political and diplomatic language itself with this pompous fustian.

Yet de Villepin's style is not what makes his writing disturbing. To be fair, when he avoids the pseudo-Romanticism, he is quite readable. And from the perspective of our own country, where many politicians cannot put together a grammatical sentence, it is almost a delight to find a public figure who can churn out six hundred consecutive pages of purple prose. De Villepin has also done his historical homework. His books draw on a wide range of sources, and are larded with evocative citations from Constant, Hugo, Chateaubriand, and Stendhal. His research falters only in a single revealing respect: while much of the important work on Napoleonic military history has been done by English writers, de Villepin uses only books written in French. In his work on Napoleon, he is an intellectual protectionist.

The really disturbing thing about the work is its politics. In a word, de Villepin has none. Instead he worships at the altar of two holy things: French grandeur and political power, as incarnated in history's "great men." As with his prose, it is as if the twentieth century never happened. Consider

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this passage from *The Hundred Days*, which deserves to be quoted at its full, dotty length:

> Here we touch on that particular essence of great men, on what distinguishes Napoleon or Alexander, Caesar or de Gaulle, from the common run. It is excess, exaltation, and a taste for risk that forms their genius. It is why they are often better understood in their élan by writers and poets, who are possessed of the same thirst for the absolute, than by those who pray at the altar of facts. Traditional politics calculates pluses and minuses. It floats along on the current, driven by the palpitations of authority, murmurs from the corridors of power, and the eddies of public opinion. Great men, on the other hand, invent history and construct their own destinies. They escape rules, ordinary judgment, the limits of human memory, and the games of transcripts and statistics. It is only through small hints, as they take wing or go into exile, that one can see, in a hand movement or glance, the secret that burns within them. They feel as much as they think; they are contemplation in action. It is instinct which pushes them, imagination which bears them along, fever and passion which possess them. Thanks to them, history finds its direction and becomes epic.

In other words, "great men" are not great because of a thirst for justice or a belief in liberty (say, Lincoln or Mandela). They are great as a consequence of their pure energy, their daring vitality. In *The Gargoyle's Cry*, de Villepin muses in similar fashion about contemporary France's slide into "torpor" and "resignation," and longs for a great effusion of collective will—not in the service of some great and worthy political goal, but for its own sake. "Our country," he writes, "advances only in crises and in tragedy." Coming from a French foreign minister, passages such as this are merely overdramatic, but think of how they would sound in the mouth of a German. There is something deeply unattractive about de Villepin's orotund and overheated paeans to his country: they combine romanticism with jingoism, and do not exert themselves about the moral substance of their national self-love.

Interestingly, by de Villepin's own questionable standards, George W. Bush is far more of a "great man" than, say, Jacques Chirac. Except for one thing: Bush is not French, and de Villepin's lists include only French figures and classical figures. Napoleon, though, was French, and de Villepin can therefore consider him one of the supreme examples of human greatness. Devoting his long book to the final, astonishing chapter of Napoleon's life—the "hundred days" in which the French emperor escaped from exile on Elba, reconquered France, and then went down to final defeat at Waterloo—de Villepin regularly refers to him as "the Eagle," and treats him as a sort of superman. He was nothing less than "the conjunction of a man and a nation ... through his destiny, everyone can feel the breath of the exceptional, preserve hope in a better future, and maintain a part of that French dream which blends into the idea we have of ourselves."

To be sure, the French superman ultimately lost, but it was "a defeat which gleams with the aura of victory." (This little statement may stand as the last word in French self-parody.) Indeed, defeat only added to Napoleon's greatness, for it gave him the chance to sacrifice himself for the greater good. I confess that I had trouble following de Villepin on this point, since Napoleon never made a willing sacrifice of himself: he lost, pure and simple. The decisions that he took in defeat made little difference for the policies of the victorious allies, or for the subsequent, tortured history of France itself. But de Villepin is far too attached to the "spirit of sacrifice" to let historical details get in his way. And lest any reader miss the religious resonances of Napoleon's final adventure, de Villepin calls one section of his book "Waterloo, or the Crucifixion."

IT MAY BE WORTHWHILE AT THIS point to recall some salient aspects of the superman's career. Napoleon was undoubtedly a dazzling personality: by the age of twenty-eight, perhaps the most successful general in French history; by the age of thirty, the country's ruler; by the age of thirty-seven, the master of Europe and the greatest conqueror since Alexander. But he was a notably unsavory personality as well. Napoleon's earliest victories in Italy were accompanied by a ruthless suppression of local insurrections, with towns burned to the ground, civilian hostages taken, and hundreds of prisoners shot out of hand. In 1798 he launched his unprovoked attack on Egypt, in a campaign marked by the wholesale slaughter of prisoners in order to intimidate the unruly population. "Citizen General," he wrote to a subordinate on October 23, 1798, "you will give the order to the commander in the town to cut the throats of all prisoners taken in arms. Have them brought this night to the Nile ... and have their headless corpses thrown into the river." (I take this from his official correspondence, published by his nephew Napoleon III.) His armies' atrocities against Portuguese and Spanish civilians between 1807 and 1814 helped to earn Napoleon the nickname "the Ogre." One of his own officers later wrote that "if we had carried out to the letter our orders concerning the Spanish insurgents, we would have had to put almost the entire population of the country to death." As for the international law so eloquently defended by his biographer at the United Nations, suffice it to say there was not a single state in continental Europe whose sovereignty Napoleon did not violate.

Napoleon was not kind to the population of France itself, either. He did introduce a concise and rational code of law, and establish an efficient state administration, and maintain the revolutionary principle of equality before the law. But he also reintroduced slavery into France's Caribbean colonies (the Revolution had abolished it), and re-established a hereditary aristocracy, and ran the country as a tightly controlled police state. His reign was marked by almost continual warfare, which caused the deaths of as many as 1.4 million French citizens, out of a total population of barely 30 million. As the liberal Benjamin Constant wrote at the start of the Hundred Days: "Under Bonaparte we would endure a government of Mamelukes; his sword alone would govern us.... It would be Attila, it would be Genghis Khan, but more terrible and more odious because the resources of civilization are at his disposal." Within a few weeks Napoleon would seduce Constant into collaborating with him, but the force of the comment remains, damning and insightful. Unlike their foreign minister, most of the French today have a decidedly mixed opinion of this man who brought them brief glory and long-lived disaster.

One might think that Napoleon's record would give pause to a high official of a democratic French republic. For de Villepin, however, Napoleon's aura matters far more than the fact that he put an end to France's First Republic and violated democratic principle and international law. Many of Napoleon's previous defenders have made much of the fact that the emperor tacked left during the Hundred Days,

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amending his own imperial constitution to establish a more liberal regime than the one he had previously presided over. De Villepin, to his credit, correctly identifies this liberal turn as a piece of pure political calculation, rather than as an expression of principle. But rather than criticizing Napoleon for the ploy, de Villepin expresses admiration for his hero's political cunning.

LATE IN *THE HUNDRED DAYS*, DE Villepin lets slip a particularly revealing comment: "To change the course of our history, we need only a handful of dreamers as in 1789, the few daring men of the 18th Brumaire, or the generous vanguard at Seamore Grove in June, 1940." The first of these examples refers, of course, to the French Revolution; the second, to Napoleon's 1799 coup d'état; and the last, to Charles de Gaulle and his followers, who refused to follow Marshal Pétain and to collaborate with the Nazis after the fall of France. It hardly needs pointing out that de Villepin's vision of all three events is not merely simplistic, it is also inaccurate. The French Revolution was in no sense the work of a "handful of dreamers." Napoleon's coup was conceived by a group of corrupt and cynical politicians who saw the ambitious general as a front man, and it nearly failed because Napoleon himself faltered at a crucial moment. As for de Gaulle, he would hardly have "changed the course of history" by himself, without the help of the American and British armies. But, more startlingly, does de Villepin really equate the architects of French democracy, and the courageous Free French of 1940, with the fomenters of a sordid, anti-democratic coup? It is hard to see how a person with a deep respect for the Republic could have written such a sentence.

De Villepin's invocation of de Gaulle is no accident. *The Hundred Days* concludes with a bathetic hymn to the man whom his admirers call "the general," who founded the political movement to which de Villepin and Chirac belong:

> A hundred years after the return of Napoleon's ashes to France, an echoing voice resounded in the night of defeat and humiliation. Nurtured by a memory of the empire, a man in London raised up the glove of French honor. He appealed to France against the renunciation and fear which, as in 1814–1815, would lead to collaboration. The Gaullist adventure renewed the élan of [Napoleon's] Consulate through the restoration of a strong executive and the authority of the State, the same scorn for political parties and for compromise, a common taste for action, and an obsession with the general interest and the grandeur of France.

Some of this passage is correct. De Gaulle did have much in common with Napoleon, including his belief in French grandeur and a strong state and his distaste for political squabbling. De Gaulle had great personal admiration for Napoleon, although he coupled it with strong reservations ("Napoleon exhausted the good will of the French, abused their sacrifices, and covered Europe with graves, ashes, and tears"). But to compare de Gaulle's Fifth Republic to the Consulate that Napoleon established after his coup—even if they do have common features—is to miss the completely obvious difference between them: one was a constitutional democracy, the other was a dictatorship.

De Villepin may long for the days of French grandeur, for an era of Napoleonic action, energy, tragedy, and crisis. Unfortunately, the nostalgist in the Foreign Ministry lives in a France that is diminished and divided (for which, of course, Napoleon bears more blame than any other single individual, but no matter). France may still carry out the occasional small-scale military adventure in Africa, but the world does not even pay it the compliment of protesting. Instead, de Villepin is reduced to de Gaulle's own tactic of defending the grandeur of France by obstructing America. Just as de Gaulle scolded and carped and claimed to offer a third way between the United States and the Soviet Union even while remaining safely under NATO's protective umbrella, so de Villepin and Chirac now pose as the spokesmen of world opinion and international law against an outlaw America.

There are many people who believed that de Villepin had valuable points to make in warning against a rush to war. If only we could believe that his argument against the war grew out of real conviction. His books suggest that in international affairs he is really an immoralist—that he has no trouble with a powerful nation imposing its will by force, taking potentially dangerous risks, and possibly violating international law. He just prefers that the nation in question be France. His writings suggest that his current

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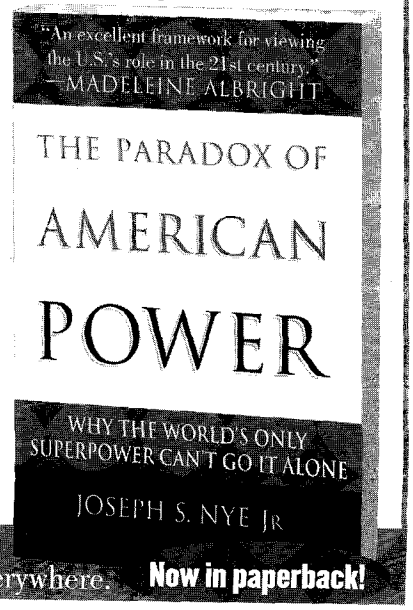
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obstruction of the United States stems not from well-reasoned political principle but from an appetite for obstructionism itself, because in this way France can again occupy the international limelight. It is laudable to want to establish the greatness of one's nation through peace, but not when the reason is one's own inability to make war. De Villepin is not so much an anti-imperialist as a weak would-be imperialist.

At the start of his book, de Villepin remarks that its writing was closely bound up with his long experience in the corridors of power. But he does not mean that he drew on his own experience of government in order to better understand the age of Napoleon. Quite the reverse. "There has not been a day," he remarks, "when, seized by the tribulations of doubt, I have not dwelled on the voice of the past... not a day when I have not felt the imperious need for memory, so as not to surrender to indifference, derision and mocking... so as to continue to move forward in the service of a French ambition." This is a fine stance for politicians to take—but everything depends on their choice of memories and the way they interpret them. In choosing to hallow the memory of Napoleon, and in promoting him into a symbol of pure glory and grand sacrifice, Dominique de Villepin demonstrates only that he is suffering from a delusion of grandeur. ■

James Wood

Traffic

COSMOPOLIS
By Don DeLillo
(Scribner, 209 pp., $25)

LIKE *UNDERWORLD,* DON DELILLO's new novel is an up-to-the-minute gizmo with a nineteenth-century heart. It tells the story of a day of reckoning, a day in the life of a young billionaire financier named Eric Packer, who begins the book full of postmodern cynicism and Manhattan materialism, and ends it chastened, suddenly penniless, and eager to change his life. This bald *Bildung* is fairly conventionally mapped: by virtue of all that he witnesses in his tremendous day, Eric will abandon his dim, matutinal confidence for an enlightened uncertainty of evening, finally beating his chest and throbbing with "enormous body sobs."

Encasing this sentimental education, however, is a frame that is anything but conventional. For a start, most of Eric's day is spent in his car, a madly customized stretch limo that functions as an office, complete with multiple video monitors and digital feeds. In the car, Eric receives his chief of finance, his chief of technology, and his "chief of theory," who drop in during the day to brief their boss. The limo is trying to cross Manhattan, but the president of the United States is in town, so progress is glacial. In the course of the day, Eric witnesses an anti-capitalist demonstration in Times Square, a rapper's funeral, and the shooting of a movie scene that involves three hundred extras lying naked on a street. All three incidents have the quality, explicitly suggested, of performance art—as indeed does Eric's halting, phantasmagoric passage through town.

Eric is given to riffing on contemporary culture and technology, in a Baudrillard-bruised language evocative of an assistant professor of cultural studies with, alas, an MFA: "He took out his hand organizer and poked a note to himself about the anachronistic quality of the word skyscraper. No recent structure ought to bear this word. It belonged to the olden soul of awe, to the arrowed towers that were a narrative long before he was born." Or: "He was thinking about automated teller machines. The term was aged and burdened by its own historical memory. It worked at cross-purposes, unable to escape the inference of fuddled human personnel and jerky moving parts. The term was part of the process that the device was meant to replace." All of the novel's characters speak to each other in this same kind of language, a gnomic, bleached argot of modern knowledge. "Money has lost its narrative quality the way painting did once upon a time," says Vija Kinski, Eric's chief of theory. Even Eric's bodyguard says, apropos of the city's presidentially provoked congestion: "You will hit traffic that speaks in quarter inches.... Barriers will be set up.... Entire streets deleted from the map."

AS WITH *UNDERWORLD,* THE success of the book hangs on DeLillo's ability to make the old-fashioned heart of his novel animate its postmodern body; and as with *Underworld,* this success is compromised by DeLillo's merely theoretical interest in human beings. Eric Packer is an idea, a satirist's smudge; he is no more human, artistically speaking, than his limousine. He exists in order for DeLillo to explore various ideas about global capital, digital information flow, financial power, and so on. From the book's start, Eric Packer is an enormous, deliberate exaggeration. This is not without humor, and DeLillo is often funny; but there is a sense in which Eric is not supposed to be real, so that DeLillo's jokes tell us less about Eric than about DeLillo's idea of how to satirize financial unreality.

Thus Eric wakes up in his forty-room, $104 million penthouse apartment, complete with shark pool, gymnasium, and a special pen for his borzois. He has two elevators; one plays Erik Satie, and moves at quarter speed, to fit the music; the other plays the music of Brutha Fez, a Sufi mystic rapper (born Raymond Gathers in the Bronx—it is his funeral that Eric will witness later in the day). Eric has had his limousine "prousted": "I sent word that they had to proust it, cork-line it against street noise." He has been married for twenty-two days to Elise Shifrin, a poet and an heiress. And he is being stalked by an unhappy former employee, a murderous underground man who has taken the name Benno Levin.

But Eric is really no more than a vessel for theory; he is given not thoughts but meta-thoughts. He enjoys deciding that certain words or phrases (such as "ATM") should be retired. Looking at his bodyguard's earpiece, "he knew these devices were already vestigial. They were degenerate structures." In Times Square, struck by the postmodern abundance of it all, "he thought about the amassments, the material crush, days and nights of bumper to bumper, red light, green light, the fixedness of things, the obsolescences, going mostly unseen." Sitting in his car, watching the digital ticker, he undergoes a typical DeLillo-loian dilation:

> It was shallow thinking to maintain that numbers and charts were the cold compression of unruly human ener-

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> gies, every sort of yearning and midnight sweat reduced to lucid units in the financial markets. In fact data itself was soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process. This was the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems, now fully realized in electronic form, in the zero-oneness of the world, the digital imperative that defined every breath of the planet's living billions. Here was the heave of the biosphere.

The difficulty of the book is working out how much of this is Eric's mildly satirized theory and how much of it is DeLillo's indulged and wanton theory. Eric would think just like this, one supposes. But as so often, DeLillo's language seems too complicit, in its scrabbling enthusiasm, with the subject of his protagonist's reflections. "Here was the heave of the biosphere" (whatever that means): alas, this sounds like DeLillo, not Eric. (But then we do not know what Eric sounds like, because he has no quiddity.) It is DeLillo who seems to be excited as he regards "the heave of the biosphere."

Don DeLillo by Zach Trenholm for The New Republic

Cosmopolis is postmodern flâneur fiction, in which the hero goes out onto the streets and, armed with the writer's literary gifts, absorbs various shocks, sightings, and revelations. Eric is Manhattan's Malte Laurids Brigge, and a working premise of this kind of fiction is that the ambulatory hero, the porous scout, will see things through the writer's eyes. This has to be the premise of such works, because it would clearly be intolerable for a novelist to have to spend a whole novel recording the world in deeply smothered eloquence. The reader tends to assume, then, that when characters such as Eric Packer start riffing about Times Square, or ATMs, or the "degenerate structures" that earpieces have become, he is being promoted by his author, who wants to have his say by means of his flâneur. Of course, what Eric sees may not be exactly what DeLillo would see, nor exactly how DeLillo would phrase it, but taken over the whole of a book such a character's reflections on the world can plausibly be regarded as comprising the worldview of his creator.

Eric Packer's techno-incantations, his amorous ruminations on postmodernity, are continuous with Brian Glassic's in *Underworld,* the Brian Glassic who stood before the Staten Island landfill and reflected thus on garbage:

> To understand all this. To penetrate this secret. The mountain was here, unconcealed, but no one saw it or thought about it, no one knew it existed except the engineers . . . a unique cultural deposit . . . and he saw himself for the first time as a member of an esoteric order, they were adepts and seers, crafting the future, the city planners, the waste managers, the compost technicians, the landscapers who would build hanging gardens here, make a park one day out of every kind of used and eroded object of desire.

Brian's rapt tone—bathetically close in impulse to Wordsworth on the Simplon Pass, or to Ruskin on Rouen Cathedral—is hardly different from Eric's tone when he regards the digital ticker in his car. There is the same rising churn of language, the same hovering incoherence, and the same conversion of concrete singularities into massive plurals. Thus, as Brian moves from thinking about one specific landfill to thinking about countless technicians, seers, planners, and adepts, so Eric moves from his ticker to the mere prospect of "the planet's living billions" and "the heave of the biosphere."

And note, too, that what at first resembles clarity is actually a rush to mystification. Eric announces that one should not think of such financial numbers and charts as the "cold compression of unruly human energies," nor as human striving brought into "lucid units." Instead, we should see that such digits are in fact "soulful and glowing, a dynamic aspect of the life process." The idea seems to be that in place of hazy figurative thinking, we must think about the thing-in-itself, data as it actually is. Yet despite DeLillo's talk of the planet's "living billions," his fancy abstractions—"the eloquence of alphabets and numeric systems," "the zero-oneness of the world," "the digital imperative"—only further sunder data from their human origins; besides which, such language is of course as hazily figurative as the language that it seeks to replace.

Underworld was full of flailing passages like this one, and *Cosmopolis* has enough of them that we can begin to define certain strengths and weaknesses of DeLillo's prose style. DeLillo does not sound like anyone else; but often he does not sound like a human being, either. There are marvelous phrases, in which he finds new language to capture new atmospheres (his greatest talent): so, during the anti-capitalist riot in Times Square, "cops free-lanced in the crowd," and "there were sirens in the distances, fire trucks caught in traffic, the sound hanging in the air, undopplered." Even at more conventional tasks, such as portraiture, DeLillo can be fresh and witty: "her hair was smoky gray and looked lightning-struck, withered and singed."

But DeLillo's chief weakness is that he does not know when to finish a sentence, frequently extending into incoherence an image that, left alone, might have hoarded its pristinity. And in such cases the language always takes on a stiffened, unreal, pluming eloquence. An example might be the decision to write of the bodyguard's earpieces as not merely "vestigial" but also as "degenerate structures." This sounds rather good; but it is the mere music of lucidity. Is "structures" the word DeLillo really wants here? Or this: "He lifted her rhapsodically higher and mashed his face in her breasts. He felt them jump and hum." Hum? Surely DeLillo simply wanted the sentence to have a certain rhythm, wanted a one-syllable verb to jibe with the one-syllable "jump." But he was not thinking of the rhythm of meaning.

Or take the moment when Eric notices, for the first time in his day, his driver, a man called Ibrahim. "He looked wary and prepared, a disposition he'd earned on some sand plain seven hundred years before he was born." This is a slightly vulgar orientalism, but it is not incoherent.

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Eric notices that one of Ibrahim's eyes is damaged: "There were evening streaks in the white of the eye, a sense of blood sun." Now, that first image—"evening streaks"—is superb; but its successor is superfluous, and tarnishes its predecessor. But Eric is not finished with Ibrahim's eye: "He respected the eye. There was a story there, a brooding folklore of time and fate." This is standard DeLilloian mystification, and more orientalism. Whatever happened to poor Ibrahim's eye was clearly not folkloric, but acutely palpable. It was not a narrative. And why "brooding"? That is just superfluous wordplay. And if DeLillo were to say that it is Eric, and not he, who is thinking in such terms, one would have to reply, once again, that the phrase has too much of DeLillo's own style in it to "pass" as anyone else's. If Eric is thinking here, then by all means let DeLillo give Eric his own language. But in this book he does not have a language that is independent of his author.

AT OTHER MOMENTS, DELILLO's prose races ahead of the actual importance of its subject. Near the start of the book, he has a little paragraph about clusters of limo drivers: "The drivers smoked and talked on the sidewalk, hatless in dark suits, sharing an alertness that would be evident only in retrospect when their eyes went hot in their heads and they shed their cigarettes and vacated their unstudied stances, having spotted the objects of their regard." This is a wretched entanglement that sounds robotic rather than human. The coda—"having spotted the objects of their regard"—resembles schoolboy Latin translation ("the town having been razed, Caesar departed. . . ."). And how exactly does one vacate one's stance without spontaneously combusting? The diction here has the blocky, pompous cast of FBI officialese ("vacate your stance immediately and exit the domicile"). But more than this, it is the lyrical excessiveness of the phrase "when their eyes went hot in their heads" that is so bemusing. The entire clumsy sentence is a crazy mixed powder of different registers. DeLillo is generally thought of as a coolly eloquent analyst of our age; in fact, his prose is often a softly romantic lyricism applied to modern objects that are not worthy of it.

And he is at it again in a curious scene in which Eric is visited in the limousine by his doctor (in fact, his regular doctor's associate). Eric has daily medical checkups, and since today he is not leaving his car, the doctor must travel to him. Eric has been talking to Jane Melman, his chief of finance, also in the limo, who watches him as he drops his pants and submits to his prostate exam. As Eric, vulnerably naked, faces his female employee, a moment of sexual hunger is communicated between them: "Something passed between them deeply, a sympathy beyond the standard meanings that also encompassed these meanings, pity, affinity, tenderness, the whole physiology of neural maneuver, of heartbeat and secretion, some vast sexus of arousal drawing him toward her." Again, the sentence has that toppling feeling of something being stretched unto gibberish. This is not an important moment in the book, thematically, but the language is vainly trying to summon enormities ("pity, affinity, tenderness").

And with such portentousness! We are solemnly told that here was "a sympathy beyond the standard meanings that also encompassed these meanings," a rhetorical confession that seems unwise given DeLillo's inability precisely to capture even the standard meanings. And it is not enough that Eric and Jane should look at each other with pity, affinity, and tenderness; there must be also involved "the whole physiology of neural maneuver." And some "vast sexus": is Henry Miller the patron of this peculiar expression? Then why not "some vast nexus," or "some vast plexus"? Once this little neural Waterloo has played itself out, the doctor finishes his exam and removes his latex glove: "The associate tore the glove off his hand and slapped it in the waste bin, the rip and the discard, dark with meaning." This is a definition of bathos. When D. H. Lawrence wrote, in his poem, about Bavarian gentians as dark with meaning, he was pondering imminent death, the final journey to Pluto's muffled land. DeLillo is describing the final journey of a latex glove.

The effect of this eager, puppyish, scrambling language, when it runs after contemporary technologies and forces, is to rob DeLillo of whatever critique he might have intended. Indeed, it is hard to discern if DeLillo does have critique in mind, so boisterously lost is his prose. He seems to want to cover postmodernity in happy licks. When DeLillo sees "the amassments, the material crush, days and nights of bumper to bumper, red light, green light, the fixedness of things, the obsolescences," or sees the digital ticker as nothing less than the heave of the biosphere, it is hard not to feel that a kind of unwitting self-flattery is being encoded, as if DeLillo were saying: "Look at how much we moderns have gathered, look at what we mightily are!" Certainly, he does not want to produce this effect; but his book has no moral center, no refuge of calm intelligence from which the reader might be able to judge Eric and his witnessings. We are imprisoned inside the fundamentally uncritical language of the now hybrid Eric/DeLillo. There is a reason, after all, that Henry James was so involved with the question of "point of view." We are saved by perspective, and its lack in a novel simply empties the bath of both its water and its baby.

COSMOPOLIS, SO EAGER TO TELL us about our age, to bring back the news, delivers a kind of information, and delivers it in such a way that finally it threatens the existence of the novel form. For in what way does this novel tell us something about the world that only the novel form could tell us? As long as writers such as DeLillo fixate on cultural analysis as the chief mode of novelistic inquiry, so the novel will be thought of as merely *unus inter pares,* one form among a number of forms (theory, cultural studies, journalism, television), all of them equally qualified to analyze postmodernity. One problem with DeLillo's already half-mortgaged language arrives near the end of the book, when he seeks to raise some moral equity, and finds himself without the means. As Eric drifts toward his ultimate redemption (which will involve financial collapse and a climactic encounter with his murderer), a transfigurative moment occurs during the funeral of Brutha Fez, the Sufi rapper from the Bronx. It is evening, and the limo has been stopped by the enormous cortège. Eric leaves his car to have a look, and soon discovers the identity of the deceased. Like everything else in *Cosmopolis,* the funeral has the ambience of a souped-up mystical art installation. Eric, of course, succumbs to afflatus: "Eric thought there was something mystical about this, well beyond the scan of human encompassment, the half-crazed passion of a desert saint." The funeral passes—thirty-six white stretch limos

> with the mayor and police commissioner in sober profile, and a dozen members of Congress, and the mothers of unarmed blacks shot by police, and fellow rappers in the middle phalanx, and there were media

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executives, foreign dignitaries, faces from film and TV, and mingled throughout were figures of world religion in their robes, cowls, kimonos, sandals and soutanes.

I wish I could be sure that DeLillo is writing this up with a smirk of irony. Of course, the exaggeration of the scene bespeaks a satirical impulse, but one always has the uneasy feeling with DeLillo that inside such proper ironic impulses lies a solid unironic nut of solemnity. For if DeLillo is not being solemn here, how to explain the empathy that he tries to extract from the scene? Sure enough, Eric has an epiphany, and this time it is for real: "Eric's delight in going broke seemed blessed and authenticated here. He'd been emptied of everything but a sense of surpassing stillness, a fatedness that felt disinterested and free." And a page later:

> He began to weep as the follow-up security detail went past, a police van and several unmarked cars. He wept violently. He pummeled himself, crossing his arms and beating his fists on his chest. The press buses came next, three of them, and unofficial mourners on foot, many resembling pilgrims, all races and styles of belief and manner of dress, and he rocked and wept as mourners in cars went by, an improvised continuum, eighty, ninety cars in slack ranks.
>
> He wept for Fez and everyone here and for himself of course, yielding completely to enormous body sobs.

"He wept for Fez and everyone here and for himself of course." Yet who is Fez in this book but a sentimentally useful piece of performance art? And who is Eric, indeed, but just the same? And how can we mourn with such specters? The alert reader might be bounced by this scene to a superficially similar one, at the end of Bellow's *Seize the Day,* a novel, like this one, that takes place in a single day in Manhattan, and also involves a hero's catastrophic escapade with the financial markets. As in *Cosmopolis,* Bellow's hero weeps at a funeral: "The great knot of ill and grief in his throat swelled upward and he gave in utterly and held his face and wept. He cried with all his heart."

But Bellow's culmination is deeply moving and DeLillo's is deeply hollow. Tommy Wilhelm, Bellow's hero, is a created individual, who is the focus and grave labor of the book's morality. *Seize the Day* tells the story of the destiny of Tommy's soul, so that its final excruciation is of great importance to us; the novel hangs or falls on it. *Cosmopolis* tells the story of some things DeLillo wanted to say about postmodernity, in varying qualities of language. When Tommy weeps at the funeral, a large part of what moves us is that he has wandered by mistake, quite randomly, into a stranger's wake, and is mistaken by the mourners, by virtue of his deep grief, for someone close to the deceased. But Eric ... well, Eric merely "wept for Fez."

When DeLillo reaches here for his desired emotional resonance, he finds only agitated air—the busy vacancy of his central character. And at the very moment when DeLillo needs us on his side, he finds that we have rebelled, hardened into stony-heartedness by the numerous excessive appeals on our sentiment that have already been made. After all, if we were already supposed to have wept for the dark meaning of a latex glove and pondered the brooding folklore of Ibrahim's eye and thrilled to the heave of the biosphere, then poor Eric's mere redemption may well strike us as one alarm too many. ■

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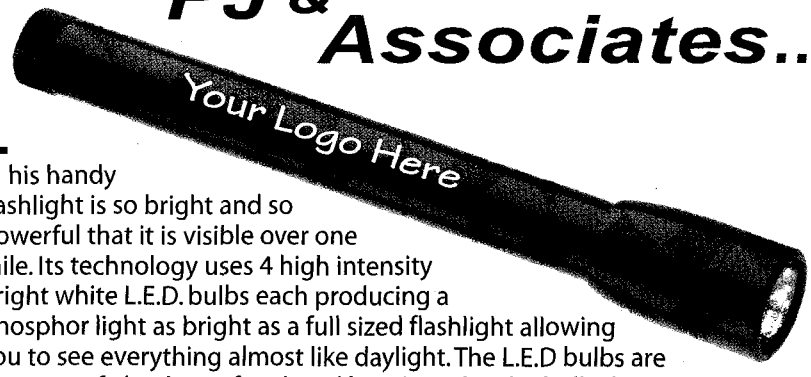

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Cass R. Sunstein
Sober Lemmings

THE SOCIAL NORMS APPROACH TO PREVENTING SCHOOL AND COLLEGE AGE SUBSTANCE ABUSE: A HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS, COUNSELORS, AND CLINICIANS
By H. Wesley Perkins
(Jossey-Bass, 320 pp., $45)

IN THE 1950S, SOLOMON ASCH, AN enterprising psychologist at Swarthmore College, engaged in some remarkable studies of conformity. Asch wanted to find out whether group pressures would lead people to reject the unambiguous evidence of their own senses. In Asch's experiments, the subject was placed in a group of seven to nine people who seemed to be other subjects in the experiment but who were actually Asch's confederates. The subject's ridiculously simple task was to "match" a particular line, shown on a large white card, to one of three "comparison lines" that was identical to it in length. The two non-matching lines were substantially and visibly different. In the first two rounds of the experiments, everyone agrees about the right answer. But in the third round all the other group members make what is obviously—to the subject and to any reasonable person—a big error, matching the line at issue to one that is conspicuously longer or shorter. In these circumstances, the subject has a choice: he can maintain his independent judgment or accept the view of the unanimous majority. What happens? Remarkably, most people end up yielding to the group, at least some of the time. No less than 70 percent of people went along with Asch's confederates, and defied the evidence of their own senses, once or more in a series of twelve trials.

Asch's findings have been replicated across cultures and nations. Conformity experiments of this kind have now been undertaken in seventeen countries, including Zaire, Germany, France, Japan, Norway, Lebanon, and Kuwait, and there are no less than 133 sets of results. People in nations such as Japan, with "conformist" cultures, do conform somewhat more than people in more "individualist" cultures, such as the United States. Norwegians are more likely to conform to group pressures than are people from France. But the overall pattern of errors does not show large differences across nations.

Asch's experiments involved the length of lines. But do group pressures also affect people's publicly expressed judgments about morality and politics? Consider the following statement: "Free speech being a privilege rather than a right, it is proper for a society to suspend free speech when it feels threatened." In one experiment, only 19 percent of people agreed with this statement when polled individually. But when confronted with the unanimous opinion of others in a small group, 58 percent of people agreed publicly! In a similar finding, people were asked, "Which one of the following do you feel is the most important problem facing our country today?" Five possibilities were offered: economic recession, educational facilities, subversive activities, mental health, and crime and corruption. Asked privately, only 12 percent chose subversive activities. But when exposed to a spurious group consensus unanimously selecting that option, 48 percent of people made the same choice in public.

These are mere laboratory experiments, but countless studies have shown that peer pressure matters in real life. Teenage girls who see that other teenagers are having children are more likely to become pregnant themselves. The level of violent crime is greatly influenced by the perceived behavior of others in the community. Employees are far more likely to file suit against their employers if members of the same workgroup have also done so. The academic effort of college students is affected by their peers, so much so that random assignments of first-year students to dormitories have significant consequences. Richard Revesz has demonstrated that federal judges on three-judge panels are conformists, too. Revesz shows that while a judge's ideology is a pretty good predictor of likely votes, "the ideology of one's colleagues is a better predictor of one's vote than one's own ideology." When environmental regulations are challenged by industry, both Republican-appointed and Democratic-appointed judges become much more likely to accept the challenge if they are sitting on a panel with two other Republican appointees. And my own studies show that when a Republican-appointee judge sits with two Democratic appointees, he often tends to vote as Democrats do; when a Democratic-appointed judge sits with two Republican appointees, he often tends to vote as Republicans do. Federal judges are strongly affected by their peers in numerous areas, including sex discrimination, race discrimination, campaign finance regulation, and affirmative action.

In short, an understanding of conformity explains a lot about human behavior—some of it harmless, some of it disturbing, some of it dangerous. Studies have shown that political violence and even terrorism are often not a product of social deprivation. Much of the time, they are fueled by social pressures. But an important question remains. Is it possible for well-motivated reformers, or for government, to use an understanding of conformity to move people in helpful directions? This book, mostly a collection of essays on substance abuse in college, suggests a fascinatingly positive answer to that question. Unfortunately, most of the essays are not reader-friendly. They are written in an unusually inelegant academic style, and there is too much repetition. And yet the book deserves a lot of attention. It offers an intriguing message, one that is beginning to be used in many policy-making domains, and whose implications go well beyond the problem of substance abuse.

A SOCIOLOGIST AT HOBART AND William Smith Colleges, H. Wesley Perkins has pioneered the "social norms approach," which is motivated by a belief that alcohol and drug abuse are serious problems on college campuses, and by a great deal of skepticism about current efforts to address these problems. A recent survey by the Harvard School of Public Health, for example, finds that no fewer than 44 percent of college students engaged in binge drinking in the two-week period preceding the survey. (Binge drinking is defined as five drinks or more in a row for men and four or more in a row for women.) On campus, binge drinking is in turn associated with serious problems, including physical injury, trouble with the police, and unprotected or unplanned sexual activity. Perkins urges that efforts at rehabilitation "are labor-intensive and expensive" and "do not reduce the overall prevalence of the problem among high-risk youth." Educational efforts, emphasizing health risks, have not been shown to have much effect, especially among young people, who do not care greatly about pos-

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sible long-term dangers, dismissing their own chance of facing serious harm. Some schools have tried the comic and clueless-sounding strategy of "alternative social events," but these are costly and have not been shown to work. Punitive approaches have had some good results among adolescents, but they have been less successful for college students.

The "social norms approach" is intended as a substitute for these failed methods. Perkins's opening claim is simple. It is that students are likely to overestimate, by a significant margin, the level of substance abuse among their peers. More particularly, Perkins shows that at a wide range of institutions students think that "the norm for the frequency and amount of drinking among peers was much higher than the actual norm or average level of consumption." In addition, students believed that "their peers were much more permissive in personal attitude about substance abuse than was the true pattern of attitudes." This pattern was found at such diverse places as Princeton University, the University of Virginia, the University of Washington, the University of California at Los Angeles, and Northern Illinois University—and at every one of the hundred institutions that participated in a nationwide study. Importantly, the pattern of overestimation can be found even in places where the level of substance abuse is high. Wherever you look, students exaggerate the level of substance abuse, and they think that their peers are more willing to approve of such abuse than they actually are.

WHY DO SUCH MISPERCEPTIONS exist? As Perkins suggests, there are several possibilities. The first has to do with human cognition—with what we are likely to recall. The "behavior of an individual or a few people under the influence of alcohol or other drugs is easily noticed and remembered," he writes, "whether it is a funny scene of uninhibited action, the disgusting circumstance of someone sick from inebriation, or a frightening encounter with a belligerent or violent individual." Without using the term, Perkins is capturing what psychologists call the "availability heuristic," by which people answer questions of probability by seeing whether it is easy to recall examples. If incidents of substance abuse come readily to mind (and for college students they are likely to do so), then the scene is set for an exaggerated sense of reality.

The second source of misperceptions has to do with the role of the media, which re-affirm and amplify those exaggerations. Instances of substance abuse receive a great deal of attention both in entertainment and in community forums. The result is an inflated sense of the problem. And Perkins does not mention another factor, the "above average" effect, by which most people think that they are better or luckier than the average person. About 90 percent of drivers, for example, think that they are superior to the average driver and more likely to avoid a serious accident. Most people think that they are less likely than the average person to get cancer, to get divorced, to have a heart attack, or otherwise to face misfortune. In this light, it seems reasonable that students would overstate the average level of substance abuse on campus and thus present themselves as doing better, or far better, than the norm.

Whatever the source of the error, Perkins concludes, plausibly enough, that an exaggerated sense of alcohol abuse is likely to have substantial consequences for student behavior. If students are affected by what other students do, the overestimation will inevitably increase alcohol and drug abuse. Hence Perkins urges that excessive drinking is spurred by a "reign of error," with "students following 'imaginary peers' as they attempt to conform to erroneously perceived group patterns." If students behave like the subjects in Asch's experiments, then Perkins is on firm ground here. "Students who are ambivalent about drinking or using other drugs and prefer to abstain feel pressure to indulge because they erroneously perceive that 'everyone' expects it of them."

So far, so good. In fact, there is nothing terribly original here. But Perkins's fresh idea is that these points can be enlisted in efforts to control substance abuse. Give students accurate information about what other students are doing. If the accurate information shows significantly less substance abuse than students expect, and if students care about what other students do, then the result should be to decrease substance abuse. Remarkably, the approach seems to work. It has been used in many places, and apparently it produces significant decreases. To understand why, imagine that many people now engage in some behavior of which they are not entirely proud—but at least they are able to say, with some confidence, that "everybody else does it." Now suppose that they learn that everyone else does not do it—that they have greatly overestimated how many others do what they do, and how many other people approve of what they do. Perkins's hunch is that some of them will change their behavior.

MUCH OF THIS BOOK CONSISTS of detailed accounts of how Perkins's method has been used at various institutions. The contributors claim to have found a consistent, positive result across a wide range of schools in every region of the United States. The first experiment, and a representative one, involved Northern Illinois University. The central goal was to get all students to understand that on campus heavy drinking was the exception rather than the rule. Hence the university's previously unsuccessful informational campaign, focusing on the harms associated with heavy drinking, was scuttled. It was replaced by a new and quite different campaign, emphasizing the value of moderate drinking and the fact that most students were not heavy drinkers. The new approach appeared to succeed. Between 1989 and 1998, the campus showed significant declines in self-reported heavy drinking, in misperceptions of what other students do, and in self-reported injuries to self or others as a result of drinking. (This study, like the others here, relies overwhelmingly on self-reports—an issue to which I will return.)

A much more aggressive approach was taken at Perkins's home institution, the Hobart and William Smith Colleges. Before the social norms campaign began in 1995, the two campuses had quite serious drinking problems, with 41 percent of students qualifying as binge drinkers. But surveys showed that students thought that the level of drinking was even higher than it was. The experimenters' main goal was to change the misimpression. They began by displaying several sets of posters around campus and in local newspapers. The first set was mysterious, consisting solely of an equation: "⅔=¼." After a set of hints, further posters provided an explanation, to the effect that two-thirds of all students drink only one-quarter of all the alcohol consumed on campus. In this way the experimenters sought to show that heavy drinkers were a minority on campuses, emphasizing on posters that the "large majority of students do only a small portion of the drinking that takes place at HWS throughout the academic year."

A second set of posters, called "Reality Check," began with a description of widely believed myths and then offered corrections. A third set, called "Healthy Choices

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Are on the Rise," described recent increases in the number of students who didn't miss class or engage in risky sexual practices as a result of drinking. The poster series was complemented by "Campus Factoids" in a newspaper column, containing information on a range of topics, including drinking, where false impressions were corrected. Campus computers were also enlisted, with library and administrative computers displaying relevant messages whenever they remained idle for ten minutes. Online discussions of substance abuse were made available for interested students. The curriculum was affected as well, with a team-taught course on alcohol use and abuse, and with some general discussion of the social norms campaign in the classroom.

Does all this sound silly or doomed? In the authors' account, the experiment did exactly what it was supposed to do. Student perceptions of substance abuse were significantly affected, with reductions in the perceived percentage of heavy drinkers and the perceived average number of drinks at parties. Personal behavior apparently changed as well. The percentage of self-reported abstainers doubled, rising from 5 percent to 10 percent. The percentage of those drinking more than five drinks in a row in the last two weeks dropped from 41 percent to 28 percent. Along every indicator, and among men and women alike, self-reported alcohol abuse decreased. And many other institutions have tried similar approaches with similar success.

PERKINS AND HIS COLLEAGUES are well aware that the same approach might be used for countless other problems—cigarette smoking, use of unlawful drugs, sexual assault, even failure to attend class. Virginia Commonwealth University tried a social norms strategy to reduce tobacco smoking. A campaign poster emphasized that "7 of 10 college students don't smoke." Before the campaign, 57.1 percent of college students smoked, a percentage that dropped to 46.9 percent ten weeks after the campaign began. Montana has adopted an aggressive "Most of Us" educational campaign, emphasizing that 70 percent of Montana teens do not smoke. The campaign is reported to have produced a substantial decrease (41 percent) in the number of teens who begin smoking. Alan Berkowitz, a contributor to this volume, suggests that male students greatly overestimate the extent to which other male students are comfortable with forced sex and with behavior that objectifies or degrades women. He contends that if male students had an accurate understanding of what other male students thought, sexual assault on campus would be significantly reduced.

A similar approach has been used outside the campus setting. Studies show that people are far more likely to give to charity if they are informed that many or most people give to charity. (There is a helpful lesson here for those who seek charitable contributions.) Or consider Minnesota's various strategies to increase tax compliance. When people were told of the risk of punishment, compliance levels were unaffected. When people were told that taxes are used for important goods and services, including education and police protection, compliance levels were unaffected. But when people were told that more than 90 percent of citizens fully comply with the tax laws, compliance increased. Apparently those who violate the law are ashamed to learn that their conduct is worse than that of the overwhelming majority of their fellow citizens.

PERKINS AND HIS COLLEAGUES appear to have discovered a policy tool that has many applications and that might actually succeed. But their work raises a number of questions. The most fundamental has to do with the reasons for conformity. Why, exactly, is people's behavior, including that of students, so responsive to perceptions of what others do? The contributors say too little about this question. Two factors seem important. First, people usually want to do what's right (or at least what's not wrong), and the actions and beliefs of other people contain information about what's right (or at least about what's not wrong). If most people drive over the speed limit or eat meat, then there is at least some reason to think that it is not morally objectionable to drive over the speed limit or to eat meat. Moreover, people usually want to be in the good graces of others. If most people think that it is acceptable to smoke cigarettes or unacceptable not to, then there is reason to go along with them so as to avoid their disapproval.

In Asch's line experiments, both explanations played a role. Some of Asch's subjects feared that their own opinions must be wrong. Others thought that their own perceptions were fine, but they did not want to look like idiots in front of a group of people who saw things otherwise. Undoubtedly some of those who engage in heavy drinking fall in the same category. And insofar as college students are peculiarly vulnerable to the cues given by the behavior of their peers, overestimates of substance abuse will greatly affect behavior. Perkins's findings seem highly plausible in this light.

But are those findings themselves overstated? Most of the authors emphasize changed student perceptions of what most students do—a fact that is not, by itself, all that interesting. What matters is not perceptions, but whether student behavior actually changes. And here the overwhelming bulk of the evidence comes from students' self-reports—from their own descriptions of their behavior. This is hardly the most reliable measure. It is easy to imagine that the social norms strategy would affect self-

Mouth Music

They call me Eugene Maher in Ballyconeely,
If I deign to stop that way on my road at all.
In Fahan they say I'm Owen Doherty,

Who is thicker by half and feet taller than me,
But that's no bother. It's just as logical
To say I'm Eugene Maher in Ballyconeely—

Where every friendly doorknob gives me entry
To a plate groaning at the high table—
As to call me whozits—Owen Doherty,

Your only man in Fahan for a party.
There are places they call me Eamonn
MacGunnigal,
But they call me Eugene Maher in Ballyconeely,

Only because I am too ragged and wee
To be taken thereabouts for James Ross Gill,
And nobody in Fahan calls me McIlhenny.

Guess my proper name and your pints are free.
You'll be the toastmaster of Donegal.
A hint: In Muff when I claim I'm Mickey
Sweeney,
They send the boy around for Dr. Healy.

BRENDAN GALVIN

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reports without affecting actual use. Suppose you learn that your behavior is highly unusual; you might then understate it without changing it. Perkins and his colleagues offer too little hard evidence about the objective measures of alcohol abuse: hospitalizations, arrests for drunk driving or liquor-law violations, incidents involving campus and local police, and the like.

To be sure, one of the studies, at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, does go beyond self-reports to look at arrests for liquor-law violations. And here the evidence is consistent with the self-reports: a 46 percent drop in the period of the experiments, from 84 arrests to 44 three years later. But the authors do not say whether they controlled for other factors that might have caused or contributed to the reduction in the number of arrests, such as a rise in the price of liquor, an increase in punishment for liquor violations, or a change in enforcement policy. To be sure, their findings are highly suggestive, and because they are consistent with so much that we know about human behavior, my guess is that there are genuine success stories here. But I wish that the authors had relied much more on objective evidence.

THERE IS A RELATED ISSUE. While people's behavior seems to have moved in the desired direction, the changes are not huge. Recall that at the University of Arizona the level of heavy drinking dropped from 40 percent to 30 percent, and that at Virginia Commonwealth the percentage of smokers dropped from 57.1 percent to 46.9 percent ten weeks after the campaign began. That is good, but it is not great. And, contrary to the authors' claims, it is not clear that the behavioral changes are merely a result of better information about what students do. These experiments involve far more than a simple presentation of the facts. They have a clear message, endlessly repeated on posters and computer screens: heavy drinkers are violating the social norm, and it is wrong to violate the social norm. The effort to change behavior uses the jargon of youth ("Reality Check"), provokes curiosity ("¼ = ⅓"), and even bombards the senses. If students are responding to that effort, they are not reacting to the bare facts, but instead to an artful and highly manipulative advertising campaign.

This point raises a much larger one. Return to the massive campaign at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, with the three waves of happy-sounding posters (culminating with "Healthy Choices Are on the Rise" and related messages popping up on idle computer screens). Learning about this campaign, I was reminded of my experience in Beijing about fifteen years ago, when I read the *China Daily* every morning. The *China Daily* was filled with merry news: about the week's good deeds, about the growing happiness and increased productivity of happy workers, about the wisdom and kindness of leaders. It would not have been at all surprising to see a big headline that said "Healthy Choices Are on the Rise." I don't know for sure, but my guess is that the *China Daily* did not have much of an effect on behavior. One reason involves trust: if a source of information is known to be attempting to manipulate people, the manipulation is unlikely to work. And if people feel infantilized by official statements, they will cease to take those statements seriously. Some of the studies here sound a little like the *China Daily*. But efficacy is not the only issue. It is hardly unproblematic to try to manipulate people, even if the manipulation can be made to work and even if it is in the service of desirable ends.

We can get at this issue by asking some questions of fact. Would the social norms approach work at an institution at which the incidence of substance abuse is very high? If the existing norm is really bad, won't the approach backfire? Perkins is aware of the problem, and he responds that some of these studies were done on campuses with high drinking rates, and they worked even there, simply because students believed that the rates were even higher than they actually were. In addition, the "majority of students always hold a relatively moderate attitude about drinking, even if they do not always behave in accordance with the attitude." But on this subject Perkins has something more disturbing to say. He insists that it is always possible to identify some variable where things are actually pretty good—and to publicize that one variable if we wish: "If one measure of an actual norm is not as positive as we might like, we should consider . . . what other measures might also be available that give a different picture." In other words, "we" might consider highlighting, and publicizing, the particular "measure" that portrays the norm in the most favorable light. The editors of the *China Daily* could not have said it better.

Perkins should be a little more self-conscious about the risks. Advertising executives, and propagandists of all stripes, usually select the best measures for moving people in their preferred directions. Since there are so many measures, there is a real danger of manipulation. In fact, some such measures could easily be invoked, if we wished, to increase the level of substance abuse. Consider an example. In 1995, 95 percent of students at Hobart and William Smith Colleges said that they did not abstain from drinking. This figure could well be used to marginalize abstainers—and to decrease their numbers. Social norms strategists come in any number of stripes, and those who know about the power of conformity might well choose a "measure" that would serve their interests. (How many Europeans distrust the United States? How many Americans accept the divinity of Jesus Christ? How many Palestinian teenagers are willing to consider becoming suicide bombers? And isn't terrorism on the rise?) When they are dealing with college students or anyone else, they should treat their audience with respect, rather than as objects of marketing.

Even more fundamentally, the social norms approach offers an unfortunate, if implicit, message: you should care a great deal about what your peers are doing, and you should be inclined to do what they do. This message fits uneasily with the basic premises of liberal education, which tries to inculcate independent judgment and some skepticism about the crowd. John Stuart Mill complained that "society can and does execute its own mandates," and so he urged the importance of protecting "against the tendency of society to impose, by means other than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them." Perkins and his colleagues are attempting to enlist that very tendency, and there is a real problem here. If students should not drink heavily, the reason is not that most students do not drink heavily; it is that heavy drinking is harmful to oneself and to others. Social norms strategies try to motivate behavior by emphasizing the wrong factor.

And yet substance abuse is a serious issue, and if social norms strategies work well, we probably should not object to them too strenuously, especially if administrators are correcting widespread misconceptions by telling the truth. Some of the authors here are too preachy; their research methods leave gaps; and perhaps they take excessive delight in their ability to move students in their preferred directions. But Perkins and his colleagues deserve considerable credit for developing a promising method for reducing harmful behavior, one that has the unusual virtue of improving matters without relying on punishment or even regulation. ■

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LONDON DIARIST

Disappointments

THE RECENT HARDSHIPS AT securities firms have exposed one of investment banking's most embarrassing aspects, and it does not concern charges of biased research, spinning, or document destruction. Something like one-third of securities-firm professionals joined the industry only in the mid-'90s, and, until 2000, their experience had consisted solely of rising markets, steepening levels of transaction volume, and compensation increasing so rapidly each year that the prospect of personal wealth accumulation seemed realistic for everyone fortunate enough to have graduated from business school and landed an investment-banking job. Now that the industry is spitting thousands of employees back out, the inability to bring historical perspective to present hardships has led many in the industry to harbor an overblown sense of disillusionment. Yes, this downturn is worse than others in recent memory, and, yes, the prospect of continuing reductions is real. But perspective is hard to come by inside securities firms, and the reflections of this lack of perspective in the press is even worse: newspaper stories about recently laid-off associates who use unemployment checks to fund a few months of dancing and clubbing; magazine articles about young millionaires puttering around their New Canaan houses relearning the joys of cooking. But, for those of us who thought that young investment bankers had cornered the market on childish behavior and a false sense of the real world, we have been given the conflict in Iraq.

IT IS NOT A LOT TO EXPECT AN ADMINISTRATION studded with former Cabinet secretaries and old military hands to have prepared Americans properly for what is likely to be a wrenching, lengthy conflict in Iraq. But, apparently, it was too much to expect. Instead of warnings about the likelihood of American and coalition service-people being paraded publicly as POWs, we got an opening offensive named, as if by boys playing army, "shock and awe." Instead of cautions about the likelihood of entrenched, fervent Iraqi resistance in difficult terrain and weather, we got the prospect of mass Iraqi defections danced in front of us like sugarplums. Instead of a realistic assessment of how difficult it will be to nab Saddam Hussein—a man who, like most despots, must have spent a portion of every week for years planning ways to escape assassination—we got, even before the military campaign had officially begun, a breathless 48 hours of "Did we get him? Maybe we got him!" This administration-induced lack of reality, coupled with its penchant for not telling the truth, or not telling enough of the truth, at many points in the U.N. process, has been especially depressing for the many of us who broadly support the current coalition initiative. If there is a silver lining to our setbacks—the downed helicopters, the loss of life to friendly fire, the taking of American and British prisoners, the delays due to sandstorms—it is that they occurred in the first week of fighting, puncturing early the false sense of welfare the administration allowed us to have. This initiative will bring many agonies, and they are only beginning.

THE U.S. BROADCAST PRESS, TAKING its cues from the administration but going them one better, has been even harder to bear. Even senior correspondents don't seem to be able to overcome the "reality TV" approach to coverage. It is too much to expect active military service-people to bring some sense of introspection or perspective to their mission; they have tasks to do, and they are likely coached to be enthusiastic, upbeat, and task-oriented when talking to reporters. But the reporters, who should know better, give us aircraft-carrier interviews with pilots just returned from sorties in which "gee whiz" is practically audible in both the answers and the questions. There is an eerie similarity between the sycophantic tone of the questions—"How did you manage to do so well on this last run?"—and the tone of the questions, only several channels away, on infomercials and shows such as "Body by Jake": "Can you really get abs like that with only twenty minutes of exercise a day?" And for what audience are the exuberant and detailed descriptions of tanks and warplanes and military hardware? Most viewers and readers don't know what an overhead camshaft is on a car engine. Despite the training, despite the strapping-on of gas masks, despite the moves for cover when explosions occur, American reporters, unlike their British and foreign counterparts, seem to exude an aura of invincibility. You get the strong sense they are on the scene not to chronicle a war but rather to chronicle a tidy victory. It is a sense they have been encouraged to do this, but that does not excuse them. (Can Daniel Pearl's execution really be so alien for them?) The Iranian hostage crisis went on for 444 days. What will our press coverage in Iraq be like in 44 days? 144? Already the administration is expressing its impatience with the press's impatience, a healthy sign and perhaps a portent of less coverage, and better coverage, to come.

ANY STUDENT OF PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE, and anyone who watched Tony Blair answer his domestic critics in his recent sessions in that chamber, would not have been surprised by the *Odd Couple* press conference George W. Bush and Blair held at Camp David. In contrast to Blair's urbanity, Bush's stultiloquence was enough to inspire a *Sputnik*-like initiative in U.S. schools to teach children how to answer questions truthfully, tactfully, and in something resembling English sentences. Pounding his hand, Bush repeated "however long it takes" three times in curt responses to a question about the time required to win the war. Blair instead made references to Kosovo and Afghanistan, gave a reminder of what had already been achieved in less than one week, and suggested as a reason for our timing a desire to achieve a number of aims—such as regime change, disarmament, and freeing Iraqis—in addition to military victory. In response to a concern about the absence of French, German, and Turkish support, Bush proclaimed his pleasure with "the size of our coalition" and then with a guffaw offered up the "list." Blair instead acknowledged both that "there are countries that disagree with what we are doing" and that a reluctance to commit to combat is understandable because war is "a brutal and a bloody business." It was a moment of American embarrassment, and not only about ineloquence. In the United States, perhaps anyone can grow up to become president. Becoming a leader, though, is more elusive. Leadership requires not only conviction but also honesty, empathy, patience, mercy, and not just the ability but also the desire to express them.

MARC GRANETZ

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The Supply Side of Choice: Needed, Interfaith Coalitions

Paul T. Hill is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution; a member of Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education; and a research professor in the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs.

If and when families get the legal right to choose schools, there is no guarantee that they will have anything from which to choose. Charter schools are few in number and most have waiting lists. Parochial schools also fill up quickly. Government programs such as the new federal No Child Left Behind Act give families the right to move children out of failing schools, but for many the school they now attend is the only one available.

School districts are willing to create new schools to serve a growing population but not to create options for current students.

In most big cities neither the government nor the private sector is prepared to create new schools. Edison Schools, a private-sector organization aimed at creating innovative public schools, is in trouble because it is the only group capable of creating large numbers of new schools: ideological opponents reason that if they cripple Edison by revoking the corporation's contracts they can hurt the entire choice movement.

The choice movement might be winning the policy battle, but an inadequate supply of alternative schools might cause it to lose the war. If choice becomes legally possible but good choices do not emerge, middle-of-the-road Americans will conclude that the school district monopoly was the only feasible way to provide schools after all.

Nonprofits that have already started to run schools and training organizations have stayed on the sidelines because, until recently, anyone ready to develop large numbers of new public schools would have been all dressed up with no place to go.

Where can large numbers of new schools come from? The key is to get experienced private organizations into the business of operating publicly funded schools.

One possible supply-side solution is interfaith coalitions of churches that have experience running their own schools. The Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Baptists, and Jews all know how to run private schools. Hundreds of thousands of people either teach or administer in such schools or have done so in the past. These people know how to make such schools work and could start new ones. As Catholic archdioceses implode financially, as a result of their recent struggles, the number of experienced people available to work in new schools will grow.

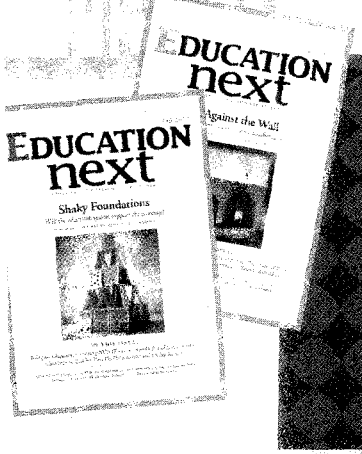
Interfaith coalitions have other advantages in that they include organizations with financial and managerial competence, established nonprofit status, and access to funds. They can easily pass constitutional scrutiny by offering value-based education that does not proselytize. Such coalitions have effectively provided low-income housing and social services. Now is the time for them to turn to education.

Interfaith coalitions already exist in most cities. All that is required is a little leadership to move them into providing schools. A single leader—a rabbi, priest, county executive, or layperson—could assemble a group to develop charter schools or create new schools to make it possible for children to leave failed public schools. Interested national foundations could offer start-up funds to interfaith coalitions willing to create new schools.

Good new schools don't just happen; groups morally committed to children's welfare must take the initiative.

— Paul T. Hill

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



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